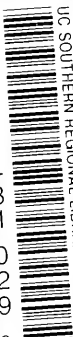


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THE STAR FIELDS

AND OTHER POEMS

THE STAR FIELDS

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

WILLOUGHBY WEAVING

LATE SCHOLAR OF PEMBROKE COLLEGE, OXFORD, AND LIEUTENANT
IN THE ROYAL IRISH RIFLES

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

ROBERT BRIDGES

Oxford

B. H. BLACKWELL, BROAD STREET

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TO
ROBERT BRIDGES,
WITH ALL THE GRATITUDE THAT I CAN,
AND ALL THE AFFECTION THAT I MAY,
I DEDICATE THIS BOOK.

INTRODUCTION

THE many readers who will find delight in these poems will care very little for my preface ; but the publisher has asked me for a few words of introduction. By the side of poems alive with spontaneity and imaginative beauty I must exhibit a patch of prose which can only betray the trouble that its writing gives me ; for, since my praise would surely be impertinent to the poet, and my judgment to the reader, there is nothing for me to say but what is printed on the title-page, that these poems are the poems of Mr. Willoughby Weaving.

In the first and last numbers of the volume the author has offered some revelation of himself : and I fear lest I may be plunging into indiscretions if I venture to add this personal item, that he sent me some poems a few years ago, while yet an undergraduate at Oxford, and ever since that day has had my sympathy and encouragement. I took one of the lyrics from his first book into my Anthology,

"The Spirit of Man," and have wondered that nothing of his has appeared in any of the numerous collections of recent verse ; neither in the "Georgian Poetry," nor in the books of "Oxford Poetry," nor even among the "War-Poems," although there can scarcely have been a more genuine and prolific poet in the trenches ; where he did well, until, invalided home in 1915, he was safely restored to his Country Muse, to whose protection I very humbly and confidently commend him.

ROBERT BRIDGES.

August 1916.

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THE STAR FIELDS

APOLOGY

NO glorious verse I send you,
No sensuous music trolled
Like the lark's, when the sons of the Morning
Stand mute, and the Gates unfold
For God to gather the notes anew
That He gave of old ;
But a plain-song, sweet to the singer,
Very simple and sweet,
Honey of earth for thee to gather
And eat.

No wonderful words I send you,
No storming of thoughts divine,
To carry all listening hearts with envy,
And some with a worship fine,
And none with the level sense of love
Which the gods confine ;

But a language clear to the singer,
 Very lowly and clear.
Brook-words uttered for thee, and silence
 To hear.

No marvellous love I send you,
 No passionate break of fire
That, scorching the lover's heart, consumeth
 The heart which he must desire,
And raiseth man to the lonely God
 In his bliss so dire ;
But a friendship deep to the giver,
 Very hidden and deep,
Treasures of earth for thee, the digger,
 To keep.

TO MEMORY

AN ODE

I

MEMORY, sweet mother of Oblivion,
Holding thy belted child beside thy knee
With mellow tales and histories of things done
Like prophesyings of the things to be,
Watching the rising dreams in his rapt eyes,
His flickering smiles and gentle dolorous sighs,
—Or haply bidding him begone to play
That thou mayest see his dancing hair and gay
Young slender limbs in languorous exercise.

Behold the boy amid the broken toys
Which Life, his fretful brother, left awhile :
How skilfully he mends, how soon enjoys,
And in the summer of his mother's smile

Flies like a happy bird that never knew
The winter, or disconsolately flew
Down long bleak barren leagues of weary sky
Back to his native summer, wondering why
He ever proved his wings and hope untrue.

II

Memory, thou sweeter sister of Regret
And of thy brighter fickle sister Hope,
—Wise sad and true, sweetest and loveliest
Sister ! like tender Evening, turning slope
Upon the West, sweet looker-back of day,
To see the World through rosy mists and gray,
And not to melt the mellow mists and show
The naked world less beautiful below,
Like day's forelooker, Dawn, in Hope's dire way.

I call thy gentle heed upon my song,
Mother of Poesy and Dreams divine,
To whom the music and high thought belong
If aught of thought or music here combine,
—That, when the woven melody is done
And all whom it may please are dead and gone,
Thou mayest give it as a gift of grace,
Unequal, though the best my hand can trace,
To young Oblivion, thy gracious son.

III

Memory, thou high-walled Garden where I find,
The sweetest and the choicest flowers of all,
Most fragrant shrubs, most delicate tendrils twined,
And honey-dropping boughs ambrosial,
And all of beauty that my heart can dress—
An ordered garden, a sweet wilderness,
High Art's self-conquest, where I still may go,
Lost between drifts of summer and drifts of snow,
And of no careful tendance ever guess.

So well hath Time, the gardener, done his work
That not a weed of all those weeds remains ;
But never have I seen his gleaming fork
Or his warped body at his careful pains ;
Nor have I thought that he had ever set
His nailed feet within the borders yet,
Till I had left them and in sad compare
At last had wondered upon all that care
That such a perfect garden could beget.

IV

Memory, thou populous city seen afar,
Sun-lapped and kindling to the sky with spires,
—Or veiled in mist, a watery avatar,
All globed with tinting bubble-domes—Desire's

Imperial abode, high Capitol,
Where in his towery palace he may dwell
 A king revered, that was a tyrant late,
 A happy servant to his high estate
And full obeyed being so dutiful.

And visited, fair city, thy broad streets
 Are filled with tireless business to and fro :
Here Friendship hath his work and fair retreats,
 And Wisdom teaches all that Love would know,
And Art pronounces all that Sweetness can,
And Vain-boy Glory is become a man,
 And Joy strikes out from all the dreaming clocks
 His mellow quarters, time's unheeded shocks,
And all is happiness republican !

V

Memory, thou quiet graveyard and remote,
 With gray moss-quartered headstones all awry,
Where Passion walketh like a priest devout,
 And all so peacefully those dead Hopes lie ;
And crippled Weariness and Pain diseased
Sleep there like hapless friends who briefly pleased,
 And, smiling through their life-long anguish, wore
 The light of Heaven on the human shore,
And from their fetters early were released.

There Sorrow, like a sexton bent and old,
Keeps trim the little mounds and neatly dressed,
Or by his lanthorn digs the rootful mould
Where the last happy slumberer shall rest,
—With mild indifference and aweless play
Of thought on trivial happenings of the day.
And sometimes dreams, like thoughtless sheep,
will pass
Browsing upon the overgrown rich grass,
And Pleasure, like their piping shepherd, stray.

VI

Memory, thou happy darkness where sweet ghosts
Wander, thou steadfast tomb whither repair
The risen souls from Heaven's encrimsoned coasts
To seek the dust which they abandoned there,
And rearrayed in living flesh resume
The well-known lovely ways before the tomb.
—Bright resurrection ! antedating death,
Clearer than hope, more palpable than breath !
—Strong cancelling of sunset and the gloom !

Memory, thou rivered forest where I walk
With living friends that were so long since dead,
And feel their hands and faces firm, and talk
With them, as I the spirit were instead

Crept back upon the happy world at last,
And they with gentle doubt were overcast,
 But would not vex my spirit with a doubt,
 So strove with very tender searching-out
To telescope the present in the past !

THE CHOICE OF ACHILLES

THEY billows knell
Their own wild passing-bell,
And tolling die, O Sea ;
But in full fervour of their might,
And white with fervour of delight,
And having reaped all life as in one sheaf,
They die for very glory utterly.
Nor live they on to learn the bitter grief
For splendour lost,
Or obdurate regret that recreates
Delight which still he wrecks and dissipates,
Or that dull worm despair that gnaweth most.

Yes, like a wave, my Mother I will be,
And die in turmoil, not tranquillity !
I will ride glory like a horse
For my brief date,
And thou shalt weep above my corse
Untimely low,

Weeping thy loss and Hellas' ! but elate
That thine own child had spent his godhead so.
For me shall Hellas wear my fame
Upon her hills as she doth wear her Gods,
And heroes shall invoke my name
Ere they plunge headlong in the battle-floods.

Wouldst have me still a girl to lead
A life as level as the summer sky ?
Still would the man prevail and need
A life like ocean ridged tempestuously,
That he might feed thereby
His full of being. Wouldst thou have me drop
Nodding into the grave a void old man,
When age's prop
Bent and then broke and all my features ran
Wrinkled and rivered—if I thus decayed
Had done no more than breathe and smile,
Should be no more remembered, having paid
No due to patient Honour ? I will pile
Memories like mountains, monumental deeds,
Solid and scaleable, Jove-high, and win
That steep Olympus-life, that still exceeds
Its briefest date, within the heart of men.

Yet were it noble still to have ta'en
The sheaf of joy, and threshed the grain ;
And ground the sallow kidneys 'twixt the stones
Of care ; and spread
Before the hungry soul, that owns
No wisp of gleaning, royally our bread ;
To tend our people well
And waxing old
To pass, leaving our name to dwell
Not on the lips of every warring wind
That uncontrolled
Yields up his stubborn ghost and dies,
But in the quiet gardens of the mind
Brooding like Love over his paradise.

My Mother, it were noble thus,
Having foregone
The keen strife and the glorious
Hazard, to win
Honour ungrasped for. But this way alone
Lies for the silver spirits that with ease
Keep in their scabbards : blades of steel
Tempered as mine would fret within,
Must leap and flash and strike and cease
In contest shrill ;

Or rot within the shade of peace
A mockery still.

I choose for strife and glory, and for death
Early and like a crown.
And he, my Mother, whom thou mournest there,
Shall still be worthy of thy tears. Renown
Shall greet thee from cold lips like breath ;
Beauty shall still array the clear
Young limbs ; and closely furled beneath
The helm or cloak or sandal the deep wound
Shall with its own proud lips relate
The splendid fate.
Then with delight thy heart shall bound,
And I shall win
An Immortality of youth and fame
And love's sweet blame
Therein.

BETWEEN THE TRENCHES

HOW strangely did you break upon
That sudden land beyond life's veil?
A moment did your spirit fail
As mine when first I knew you gone
The last dark journey, saw your clay,
So vacant, loveless, borne away,
And the features that I loved to scan
The same but of another man
Unknown—a bright dream all undone?

What stranger did the bearers lift
In their soiled stretcher lightly laid
Where I had seen you fall adrift
From life—had time to be afraid?—
That, all of you that had breathed and moved,
That, none of you that lived and loved,
A shell that so I seemed to hate
For claiming still its lost inmate,
A false pretence, a solid shade.

Shadow more solid, but less real
Than love and laughter, whence it fell
Across my path with mute appeal
And served your spirit's purpose well—
So well that even I could see
It indistinguishably thee,
Till you had left it like a sheath
With laughter in the hands of death,
And left me gay, not miserable.

Ah ! love had never more to lose :
If certain love had less to tell
Then might I in despair's excuse
Bid you a hopeless vain farewell,
And by the stranger's grave have wept
A solemn while, and sadly kept
In mind his features filled not through
With breathing life, love living, you
Who smiled upon his burial.

THE BEE

BEE-BREAD packed upon his thighs,
Labouring home the last bee flies.
Judged he of his strength so well
That at last fordone he fell
On the hive-sill swooning, dead,
Safe with the yellow bright bee-bread.

Out they hurried soon enough
To unpack the precious fragrant stuff ;
Pushed from the littered sloping stair
His useless body hindering there,
Not even sparing him the thought
To blame him that he overwrought,
Robbing the hive of future spoil,
Being so prodigal of toil.

GHOSTS

(FLANDERS, 1915)

BY rosy woodlands all aglow
With Autumn, slow-consuming fire,
By drintling brooks that broaden now,
By hill and hollow and mead and mire,
By farms mid all their yellow ricks
From ivied chimney smoking blue,
And by the lofty kiln where bricks
Stand piled in cubes so red and new,
By queer thatched hamlets all askew,
And by the little unbusy town
Around the old gray spire we knew,
We pass again, but all unknown.

Again we guide the jolting plough,
Or bake the brittle tinting clay ;
But none will mark our labour now,
Urge as we will, toil as we may.

L. O. AND K. R.

KILLED IN ACTION, SEPTEMBER 25, 1915

HOW are the mighty fallen—
Giving much glory
Unto the earth their mother,
But from me
Taking how much more glory,
The glory of friendship :—
God of Battles,
What heart have I left for thee ?

Beautiful in their lives
The singer telleth ;
And in their deaths how splendid,
Oh, who can tell !
How in glorious death I love them,
How can I say ?—
I who in life
Loved them so unspeakably well.

THE NAIAD

THE dewy fields like roughened silver shone
When down his vapour-valley cragged with fire
The rosy sun browed up to look upon
The waking freshness of his heart's desire ;
Then leaped into the skies in full attire
Of blazing splendour, for the Earth to praise,
That in her yearning seemed more beautiful always.

Wet were the ringing woodlands tall ; and still
Thin shreds of mist hung tangled in their hair,
Sure proof that in the night-time dark and chill
The sun's great fleecy sheep had pastured there,
And now were wandered into the wide air
Since first their shepherd's rosy crook was seen
Shining before him as he clomb the steep ravine.

Now all the birds were singing those fresh songs
That fetch the rapid heart up and restore

Time to that point which Memory prolongs
Behind and hapless Hope projects before
—That happy point, eternity's bright core.
And like soft showers their singing seemed to fall,
And like the coloured bow love to brood over all.

And I along the ringing woodland went
With all my heart wide like a crystal pool :
The tender flowers, leaves, boughs, firmament,
Shone back untremulously clear and cool
—A new discovered country beautiful !
But clearer than a pool my heart shone through,
For there the songs of birds were sound-reflected too.

And the sweet-mingled odours of the flowers
Breathed back. O happy Present which outsped
The wingèd Past, and resting on his powers
Flew not to meet the Future far ahead !
—Nay, drew time in and timeless was instead,
Like sleep or swoon that sets the spirit free
To lie ungathered out in all eternity.

But suddenly upon my heart there fell
Thought like a shadow—not to warp and blur
Like breath bright images which there did dwell,

Nor like joy's self within the pool astir,
Nor like the stone that Petulance flings there
—But like a darkness brooding low to blot
Them softly out as yearning, and distort them not !

For up the grassy bank beside the wood
The brisk white-bobbing rabbits fleetly ran
In bossy flight, and vanished : with her brood
Down to the river rushes split with tan
Sped the black moorhen, flicker-tailed. “ Who can
Affright the creature so ? ” I thought—and saw
A maiden from its ribbon swing her hat of straw !

—Of yellow plaited straw. And as she came
She laughed to see the red-billed moorhen's haste,
And waited till the fluffy brood became
Invisible within the water's waste.
Then forward like a goddess yet she paced
Behind her fluttering laughter keen, that stung
Like most delicious lightning my heart's roots
among.

Like lullèd thunder o'er my heart she broke ;
And Love, who had been sleeping there so long
That life had near forgotten him, awoke

Believing he to dreams did still belong,
And strove to see her baffling face among
My heart's wild waves which, stilling out in vain,
Ere they could hold reflection wildly rose again !

She passed. And she was beautiful indeed !
Alas I cannot tell you what she wore !
—But slender, stately seemed she as a reed,
And like the river's waves she passed before
My sight, all grace of motion. Nothing more
For very joyful blindness could I see,
Save that she went along, and passing looked at me.

Oh ! who will draw for me her haunting face
—Pale, haggard, dark and beautiful as pain,
Uneager-passionate ?—or haply trace
A blonder beauty that shall still retain
My memory—until she pass again—
With honey-coloured hair and rosy smiles ?
—Nay, hair like river-grasses binds my brain the
whiles !

Alas, a lovely naiad, simply clad
In flowing grace and her limbs' loveliness !
But still my heart will horde the joy he had,

And strive to clothe her in a human dress,
And tease me with her swinging hat, and press
This burning hopeless question, " Wherefore ran
Those frightened creatures from her then, as from
a man ? "

C.'S FRAGMENTS

HOW the wind from perished embers
Blows the great gray flakes along,
Like the echoes of a song
Which a poet's heart remembers
From its travellings among
Brighter worlds, and as they hasten
Strives to catch and bind and fasten,
Building up from strength to strength
All that music's fabric strong,
And leaves upon the world at length
Ruins that time did never wrong.

LIFE

AN EPIGRAM

MAN hath but little time to set
His strong-built house in order, yet
Spendeth what little time he hath
In building him a house of lath.

SONG

O SWEET my love! O true my love!
What did we most forget
When in a sweet remembering
We could remember yet?
Even that we were remembering
We did forget,
Enjoying yet.

O sweet my love! O false my love!
What would I most forget
When in a sad remembering
I must remember yet?
Even that I am remembering
I would forget,
Forgiving yet.

ANCILLA DOMINI

SHE bare two lilies in her hand,
Dispassionate as snow,
Made by the Architect who planned
Her peerless brow ;
She needed not, as you would see,
These sceptred flowers of purity ;
But gave them splendour and white command
Below.

Yet seemed it all as service sweet,
Which still itself disowns :
She took due homage and praises meet,
And hidden frowns
With such humility of mien
As would befit a sovereign Queen,
When subject monarchs before her feet
Lay crowns.

She wore a garland in her hair,
 Blue cornflowers loosely bound,
 And you would say she was more fair
 Than royally crowned ;
 Tho' cornflowers are so royal and blue
 And, lacking scent, make up in hue
 And fill with beauty the wooing air
 Around.

Graces about her seemed to sway
 As she more royally moved :
 She was more worshipped, you would say,
 Than fitly loved.
 For who could love and not demean
 So true, so natural a queen,
 Tho' love should bury his crown away
 Disproved ?

And yet such tenderness withal
 Even with her beauty vied,
 That love rose from his worship all
 Unsatisfied,
 And searched her pale uneager face,
 Like Spring in Winter's white embrace,
 That came too rashly, poor happy thrall,
 And died.

Within her hungry eyes intense
Her searching spirit hung,
As in the night's dark vault immense
The stars are stung :
About her holy ways she went
In solemn kind of languishment—
A wringing passion by innocence
Unstrung.

Invisibly as breezes pass
In Maytime through the land,
And bend like hair the shadowy grass
With gentle hand,
A consecration, a caress,
Of more than human tenderness,
Approved her beauty with love that was
Unscanned.

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

IN a manger where the kine
Munched their hay, the babe divine
Lay, and those streaked cattle mild,
Wondering at the little child
Sniffed around his lowly bed,
But left unwrenched beneath his head
The soft sweet hay he needed now
Who could so bounteously bestow.

Strong like wine the starry night—
One large travelling star forlorn
Guiding, leading, urging bright—
Mary's child is safely born !

Who are these ? What do they bring ?
—Salutations to a King.
In their rich and royal array
—Surely they have missed the way.

Joseph, go and bring them back
From the rude and broken track
To the highway broad with ease
For such appavelled kings as these !

Strong like wine the starry night—
One large staying star forlorn,
Urging, pointing, anxious-bright—
Mary's child is royally born !

Gold and Frankincense and Myrrh ?
—Oh ! what mean ye, sir and sir,
Kneeling in upon the straw,
Rapt of eye, as if ye saw,
In a palace fair and free,
A King and greater far than ye
With your golden crowns so bright
And gifts so rich and exquisite.

Strong like wine the starry night—
One large rosy star forlorn,
Pointing, crowning, dooming, bright—
Mary's child divine is born !

RUTH : ABBESS

FULL orb'd and crimson rose the harvest-moon,
And stars lit up the arid summer night,
And no dews fell upon the thirsty land ;
But where sad Ruth had lain, the withered leaves
Shone happy with her tears. Then she arose
And sought her chamber in the eastern tower,
And sadly drew the curtain from her shrine,
And with the taper trembling in her hand
Lit up the holy candles, and kneeled down
And gazed with eyes devout as they were sad
Upon the ivory crucifix ; then bowed
And pressed a silver cross upon her brow
And prayed in agony of soul and said,
In deep calm dreadful tones, “ Mother of Christ,
Our blessed Lady, hearken to my prayer,
And still repeat it in the ears of God.
This was our wedding-day, but he is slain,
Alas, and buried hence—I know not where :
But grant me in the solemn peace of night
One sweet communion of soul with him,

And to thy service I will give myself
And all I have and all the years shall bring.
Yea, I will give thee my whole heart, nor have
Aught of mine own but consecrate to thee."
So earnestly she prayed, and laid her down
Still robed, and clasped her hands across her breast,
As if for death. And suddenly she slept.

And on the morrow at the flush of day
She rose and kneeled again before her shrine ;
But heaviness had left her limbs, and joy
Replenished her, and gratefully she prayed.

And when she stood before her tiring-glass
And looped the shining tresses from her brow,
Aghast she saw upon it still impressed
The fashion of her little silver cross ;
And with a soft pure light it seemed to shine
And soothe her spirit. But with dreadful haste,
Fearing the sign and jealous for her joy,
Two tresses thick she drew with woman's skill
Across her forehead and impleached them low,
Like Roman maids of old ; and thus concealed
Went down to meet her sire.

But all day long,
Though she assayed to tell her sacred vow
And spake in timid words, the brusque old man,
Impatient of her faltering tongue, broke in
And turned her will with words of hearty cheer,
Or told of hawk and hound that pleased him late ;
Deeming she mourned and strove with grief to ask
Of her dead lover, he would soothe her thus.
But when at eve she rose and served his wine,
With sudden strength she told her secret vow ;
And first with scorn he answered light, and then,
“ Marry ! ” quoth he, “ where is thy daughter’s
care ?

And wilt thou leave alone thy widowed sire
To nurse the shades, with none to serve his wine
Or loose his harness when he comes from war ?
Thy mother died for thee, and thou hast all
A wife’s and daughter’s love—thou shalt not go ! ”
But she had gathered courage from her voice
And from his scorn and even from his grief,
And when with woeful tears she prayed him still
He waxèd wroth and vehemently cried,
“ Christ’s Blood ! What folly is it ! Thou art young,
And in young hearts love springeth like a plant.
One blossom dies and falls and feeds the roots
With rich decay, and thence new blossoms burst

And fairer.—Keep thy purpose if thou wilt
—If twelve moons hence thou art unchanged, and
still

Repentest not, I will not hinder thee ! ”

And she, enkindled by his angry words,
The more for the great love she bore him, spake
Coldly : “ A promise is it ? ” “ Aye, a promise ;
And mayest thou be truer to thy God

Than to thy natural vow, a father’s love ! ”

So spake he, still unmindful in his wrath

Of her betrothal in the days gone by,

And she : “ So be it ! ” Then she kissed his brow,
And sought her chamber and kneeled down to pray ;
But no words came. And through the wakeful night
Her soul was haunted by her aged sire ;

And desolate he looked, and raised his brow

And smiled upon her sadly. And she wept,

And in her anguish cried aloud, “ Alas !

Christ’s Mother give me strength ! ”

Now as the year
Rolled through the heavy winter and his wheels
Were caked with snow and hindered, and some-
times

His driver Time blew in his chilly hands

And made advance no more, with tender care

And service meet she waited on her sire,
And guarded every whim with wakeful love,
And yearned upon him with her sacred vow
For ever at her like a canker at her heart.
And oft when she had served his wine and kissed
His brow and sadly to her chamber crept,
He chode his heart that he had ever used
Harsh words and taunted her with lack of love,
And muttered to himself, " God will forgive
And Christ His Mother if she thus forget
Her sacred vow ! "

And at the break of spring
He went to war, and she was left alone.
And when all the woods were green and all the hills
Were white with snowy drifts of May, she found
That she was ripening with child, and awed
She told her aged nurse and bade her keep
It secret ; and she wept for fear and joy,
And her old nurse for joy. And when the moon,
The ninth moon from her mystic marriage bed,
Was full, the child was born, and all her heart
Was turned to her dead lover and his child ;
And long she prayed before her little shrine
For gratitude. And secretly she kept
Her child and cherished him, and all forgot

Her warring sire save when with sudden dread
She thought upon his wrath. And then she turned
And bade her nurse be secret with hard voice ;
And when the nurse chode with her for her doubt,
She wept upon the child and softly prayed
Forgiveness for her fear.

Now when the time
Drew near her sire's return and the set day
That she should keep her vow, then sad she grew
And reasoned with herself, " If I should go
And to the Abbess' question, when she asks—
Art thou a virgin ? Hast thou had no child ?
—Should answer, Nay, and be refused, it were
A shame upon my father's house ; and if
I answer, Yea, I am not wed, and swear
I have no child, it were a lie to God.
God hath done this ; and for my father's sake,
And for the love I bear him, hath absolved
My sacred vow." And yearning o'er her child
She spake, and strove to ease her spirit thus ;
And vainly strove.

At noon her sire returned,
And she with heavy soul his stirrup held,
And heard his greeting absently, and let

His arms embrace her, moving not. And then
He stroked her long bright hair, and softly bent
Her forehead back, and looked upon her face,
And kissed her lips, and tenderly he said,
“ How pale thou art, my daughter ! How thy smiles
And joy are veiled in grief of love too long
Deserted. I have been too long abroad.
Forgive me, O my child ! ” And then she wept ;
And weeping on his breast he bore her in.

Now when he had appeased his hunger keen,
And she with trembling hand had served his wine,
And he grew glad at heart, “ My love,” quoth he,
“ It is the day that thou shouldst keep thy vow,
Art thou so minded still ? ” In mirth he spake.
And she with low cry utterance replied,
“ Nay, no new love hath won my anxious heart
From my dead lord, to spoil my sacred vow ;
But here I would abide to serve thee still,
And God in mercy hath absolved my vow.”
And joyed at heart he cried, “ God’s will be done,
Who watcheth o’er a father’s love ! ” And rose,
And took her hand and drew her to his side ;
But with a startled cry she broke away,
And hurried from the hall, and left her sire
Astonished. And he blamed the gleaming wine

And his loosed tongue that he had called to mind
Her vow, and bitterness of soul ; and sware,
And strode the darkening hall ; and from his wrath
His hounds with close tails slunk.

But Ruth had sped
And reached her chamber, and made sure the door,
And would have cried aloud, but there she saw
Her child asleep upon his little bed.
Then tenderly she bowed and kissed his cheek,
And whispered softly, " O my son, my son !
Where hadst thou found a mother's care ? And I
Had died for need of thee ! "

Now when she lay
That night upon her bed a soothing peace
Stole o'er her, and she slept ; for lack of sleep
Hung heavy on her brows. And suddenly
Her plighted lord appeared beside her bed,
And all around him shone a tender light
That showed his features pale and sorrowful.
And stooping low he kissed the little babe
Upon his brow, and yearningly he looked,
And bowed his head upon his cloak and wept,
And kneeled before her shrine. Then she awoke,
And plucked the baby from his bed and felt

His smooth warm limbs, and clasped him to her
breast ;
But o'er her arm his little head fell back,
And stricken cold with fear she looked and saw
Upon his brow the image of a cross
That gleamed with wondrous light. But he was
dead.

Then with dry heart and 'wildered eyes she laid
The child upon his bed and softly sleeked
His pillow down, as if he lived and slept.
And then she clothed herself in white, and left
Her long black hair unbound, her feet unshod,
And took the child, and down the steep dark stair
She stole into the night.

At early dawn,
When the old portress at the Convent gates
Shot back the bolts and swung the great doors wide,
She found a lady kneeling on the steps
And clasping at her breast a dead cold child.

NAIAD'S SONG

WHERE the mountain-fed torrent
Falls shivered like glass,
As a stretched hand the vapour
Points down the green pass ;
And deep in the shadow
The brooding fern tires,
With green life too heavy ;
And drooped from their wires
The spider-like ivies
Hang each a sad knot
O'er swift meshes of water,
Or vivid green blot
Of mosses that fleck like a plague-spring of green
The black-bedded ravine.

And if ye will follow the thin pointing hand
Of mist, ye will come
To an island edged round with a silt of grey sand,
Like the nail of a thumb,

A slab of pink stone where we hover and sing,
 At the head of the Autumn and trail of the Spring,
 Now of perishing youth and of love that consumes
 The heart it enkindles, and beauty that wanes ;
 Now of glory that with its gay colours illumines—
 Bright banners that lead to destruction—and shines
 On all the fair trees save the cedars and pines ;
 The passion and glory which charm and betray
 Their fellows, but most to be pitied are they,
 For they see the sad changes and brood in despair
 When the winter lies thick in their hair.

LOVE

(LATE AUTUMN, 1912)

THE trees are plucked, the azure skies decay,
The flaming year is to his ashes burned,
And all the world is scarfed in misty gray ;
The spells are broken and the songs unlearned ;
And Love, whose lamp glows purest and most fair
Amid the darkness of unlovely things,
Alone of all the spirits of the year
Remaineth here,
And in the ashes like a cricket sings.

Alone—alone from Winter's lifeless head
She crept to meet young Spring upon his way
And all the folk that followed in his tread ;
To pass with him on Autumn's turning-day
—Blithe Hope, and Pleasure with his dancing eyes,
And loose-girt Revelry, and light-foot Dream,
Industrious Happiness, long companies
Most weatherwise
And soon to pack when Phœbus clipped his beam.

TO CAPTAIN GREWAR

MAY all that dazzles other folk
Simply delight thee : to this end
Good fortune's utmost I invoke
On thee, my friend.

Knowing how surely 'twixt your knees
You grip the jade howe'er she plunge ;
And, undislodged, punish with ease
Her backward lunge.

And if she roll, or rearing fall
To crush you from her, fell intent,
Can well escape, still keeping all
Your management.

Knowing with what uneager skill
You curb her random speed and trend,
Then spur her on against her will
To your good end.

And if she come, for once subdued,
To nuzzle at your careless hand,
You, who so long have understood,
Still understand.

Then ride good fortune far and first,
By ploughland, fallow, dale and hill,
Whether she do her best or worst,
Her master still.

EPITHALAMIUM

LIE thou at last, foregathered as thou wert
To her bright soul, in the limbs' white embrace
That even slumber hardly shall displace
Or happy weariness leave all ungirt,
In soul and body sealed, with heart to heart,
And lips to lips, wherethrough the spirits race,
Bound hand in hand to sanctify with grace
What love calls holy—and may life leave unhurt.

Sweet union, in the spirit long foreseen,
Now in the body doubly made complete,
Whereover may love ever brood serene,
And ye for ever lying at love's feet
Know only slumber's parting, when his keen
Sword like a kiss disparts your kisses sweet.

CYPRIAN

TRANSPORTED to some trenchant mountain
high,

If thence, my friend, thou could'st at once behold
Tumultuous life with chances manifold—
A many-rifted ocean waveringly
Singing 'twixt shore and shore, 'twixt sky and sky,
As 'twere time's mighty pendulum controlled,
And yet controlling the large moments told
Among the dialled stars so silently ;—

Could'st thou, I say, encompass in one ken
Life's unpredominant whole, thou could'st not
choose

But laugh at it, or pity it, like a boy
Generous. But thou, amongst deluded men
Sharest the world's greater part, the happier use
Despite those chances fully to enjoy.

LUCRETIUS' DREAM

I DREAMED that Satan stood beside my bed,
And yet so unlike Satan, as I thought,
Was he, for his calm countenance was fraught
With such sad sweetness and such hapless dread ;
And hopelessness from his dry eyes was shed
More pitiful than tears, but so inwrought
With some appalling purpose, that distraught
I cried aloud. And answering he said :

“ Friend, for thy pity thou hast won my love
That unto thee no pity can return—
Pitiless love—stern punishment ! ” And while
I watched his wordless lips in anguish move
My own lips eased his heart in language stern :
“ Him most to love whom most I must be-
guile.”

HECTOR

WHEN Winter took from February's breast
The infant Spring against his hoary beard,
Whilst in his cold blue eyes like fire appeared
Such tender love as pride leaves unconfest,
The child laughed out at being so carest
And smote his little fist, all undeterred
By his sire's frowning mien and rugged word,
And icy harness, and white brustling crest.

“Go, little imp,” ungraciously he said,
“Back to thy Mother's tenderer heart.” The
child
Clung to his beard with laughter, undismayed,
Nor by his Mother's baits would be beguiled,
Nor by his Father's threats, who, grown afraid,
Bent down with kisses and for quarter smiled.

SHELLEY'S HEART

HOW the tall flames above the caving pyre
Fold like the Cherubim with meeting wings
Above God's Ark, when from its wanderings
It came to solemn rest at God's desire,
And Solomon, as silently as fire,
So splendidly accomplished promised things,
And housed his God more sumptuously than kings,
For the disappointed spirit of his sire !

Cedar from Lebanon, from Ophir gold,
And from the Syrian king his craftsmen skilled—
No sound of hammer fell, no chisel shrilled
Within the Temple's precincts' haunted fold,
Till soon 'twixt brooding Cherubim, 'tis told,
Between the staves God's Ark stood as God
willed.

THE LOST MISTRESS

WHAT love might be you never thought ;
But in your eyes and in your hair
Love set all sweetness like a snare,
Although perchance you knew it not ;
And in the waving of your hands
The mystery of unknown lands,
The spell of tattered banners leading,
The lure of conquest still receding,
The easy power of strong commands ;

And in the wavering of your feet
A languid purpose, lithe as fire,
To tread upon prostrate desire
And lift him like a flame of heat ;
And in your branching neck the ease,
The silent beauty-strength of trees
Upholding heaven ; in all your motions
The supple sovereign sway of oceans
And all their costly sympathies ;

And in your voice the baffling note
That æons wait on till it thrills
The thrilling silence of the hills,
And earth is shaken like a mote
Between the fingers of the sun ;
Yet you knew not what love had done,
Or if you did, what lovely features
Can still belie such monstrous creatures !
Nay, this I cannot think upon.

DIANA OF THE TEMPEST

HER wild black tresses blown out before her,
Storm comes filling the feckless skies,
And who hath the terror to triumph o'er her
Or sympathise?

Not shall the wooing of weakness win her,
Nor stronger scorn break her pride like bread :
Only by the wild wind-hounds that bedin her
Can her heart be led.

MEDUSA AWAKE

WINTER like a penitent
Comes in her thin shift of frost,
And like bows the skies are bent
With their feathery shafts engrossed,
And like shields the black pools shine—
Oh, save her from the wrath divine !

Like a penitent—beware !
What is this that I behold—
Elf-locks ? Serpents ! writhing hair,
Features lovely—fell and cold
From the black pool's mirror shine
Beauty—horror—both divine !

SUNSET

WHEN the sun to his bed is declining,
And the clouds in his colours await
His rosy cessation of shining,
And the shadowy birth of repose,
And night with her black hair's entwining
Of all his proud fiery estate,
And the moon with her silver repining—
Love's star-troubled close.

All the woodlands are wet with the risen,
The strange drenching earth-rain of dew,
And like Danaë free in her prison
Lies Earth in the arms of the mist
All golden, and splendours bedizen
The lake's second heaven, where blew
Of late little breezes to wizen
Her pale amethyst.

INTERLUDE

WHEN the trees like guttering candles stand
Side-stacked with lobes of snow
Around the bier of the cold gray year
And the hours, his children, hand in hand,
Wondering kiss his brow,
The cold white brow that rebukes their kisses,
And the motionless lips—are they angry? How?

Of the hours, his children, the youngest sings
Like a bee round her father's bed
Softly, and lifts up the pall's white drifts,
And hides from his feignèd slumberings,
Laughing with happy dread,
And waits for the hand that gropes and misses
And grasps, and the wild sweet words unsaid
—Mumbled out in a smother of kisses,
The wave that breaketh beyond the dead.

ACRISIUS

HOW white these winter's moments are,
Slow-fluttering, half-substantial things ;
Time falleth in a silver shower
To the earth, his Danaë, fain to unbar
His heart of love, and mock the king's
Frost-oublietted iron tower,
And fill her with the fatal Spring's
Birth and most deadly generous power.

THE MAN AND THE STATUE

“**O**NE whom God loved ” men wrote upon the
slab

Of polished stone that roofed his last house in.
Above his heart they wrote it, for his soul
Returning thither—as a man grown great
Revisiteth the little garden plot
And cottage thatched, wry-windowed, crooked-
walled,
With sweet regret ; and shrinks into the boy ;
And grows again into the toiling man ;
And loves the old pains and the pleasures old,
Glad to throw off the splendour and the fame
He is unused to still—thus for his soul
Returning, till his heart’s walls crumple in,
To fill the letters as he lightens through.

So : and they bade their fairest hands to carve
Dead stone into a pale surprise of life,

His character and image, his calm face,
With all its lines and hollows filled with good,
Yet haunted with the holy care of one
Who strove his little on the side of God
To wring the world from co-original ill.
And he, a sculptor of far-told renown,
Rejoicing in the praise of this request
And no less in the glorious enterprise,
For thrice three days toiled on laboriously,
Caught up by fervour neath the wings of time ;
And so forgot his needs of flesh that late
On the ninth day, by hunger overcome
And the faint heart's revolt for sleep, he sank
Before the half-hewn marble, sighing out
“ God grant me strength to finish it, and I
Resign the glory of my masterpiece ! ”

And at the burst of day they found him dead,
But on his brow and round his parted lips
A gentle light of triumph hung like life.
They raised him with sad awe and laid him out
Upon his bed, still grasping in his hands
His instruments. And then between his brows
They found the strange and delicate impress
Of three large fingers, and beneath his hair,

Unsinged, a deep brown band, as though a crown
 Of mystic fire had lain there ; and they gazed
 Into each other's eyes and read therein
 The same unanswered question. Then they came
 And wondered at his work, and one with awe :
 " 'Tis flesh and blood, I swear it ! " but the rest :
 " Nay 'tis the natural colour of the stone,
 And thou art wrought upon by sudden death
 And those mysterious scars." And he replied :
 " By God's own beard, I swear it, when we came
 And found the sculptor dead with that strange look,
 I felt this carven hand and it was warm—
 Just warm like flesh when the departing soul
 Hath sped, and the strained breast slowly hollowed
 in ;
 'Tis cold now, but it yieldeth like dead flesh ! "
 They felt and sadly smiled, and him they led
 Away, lest awful dread should work a harm
 Upon his mind.

And in the market-place
 They set the statue up ; and all men came
 And marvelled, and some wept. But as the days
 Passed o'er the market-place, the precious stone
 Began to peel and flake away like flesh
 From disembalanced bodies. And in dread,

60 THE MAN AND THE STATUE

Lest in the stress of weather the great work
Should be destroyed, they moved it from its place
And set it 'neath the Roof of Fame hard by.
But there the stone still crumbled into dust,
And all that beauty faded ; till they came
One splendid daybreak, and in fear, cold fear,
Found nothing but a skeleton—a cage
Of empty bones. And while they stood amazed
It crashed upon the pavement at their feet,
Shattered to shards and splinters white and dread.

And soon with solemn candles and slow chant
Of slow-processing choir the Fathers came,
And gathered up the fragments and the dust,
And laid them in a yellow vase of gold,
And set them on a bier of olive wood.
And round the urn they looped a coronal
Of rosemary and lotus and dark bay
And tremulous valley-lilies. Over all
They spread a gauze of silk and silver thread ;
And sprinkled holy water, and kneeled down,
And to the fume and waft of incense high
Made Latin prayer to Heaven. Then they bore
The dust to the high altar through the town,
And finger-blessed the kneeling populace.

THE MAN AND THE STATUE 61

This is the story. And the slab remains
In middle aisle of the cathedral there,
Engraved, "One whom God loved." And still the vase
Stands in the niche beneath the altar high.
But who these men were, whom God loved, and who
Carved out the statue, is no record known.

THE DOVE

GO, little song,
Sweet with the wisdom of undoubted love,
And many-tinted as the foolish dove
Glint unguessed colours in the fostering light
Of eyes so blue and bright,
As thou in silent music movest along.

Then furl thy wings
Within the tender ramage of her heart
Till she shall seek and all the boughs dispart,
Searching for thee to feed her eyes upon,
And finding thee anon
Yield thee more sweet than every bird that sings.

SIN

SIN, like delight,
Hath pinions bright;
And, like dark woe,
Talons below,
And the eagle's way
To dash his living prey.

PHILOSOPHY

GNARLED and knotted thoughts divine,
Stripped of all dazzling colours rare
That life, like Autumn, painted there
To hide rough truth at love's decline.

Ruthless the silly leaves are stripped
For winds to play with, rains to brew ;
And wise old boughs are laid to view,
Grand trunks which all vain storms have gripped.

Nay, hang up Autumn's hues again
Tho' pleasure like a wanton prove ;
One little treasured leaf of love
Is worth all thinking's high disdain.

RUBRICS

THESE happy rubrics whilst I kiss
Do I Love's proper service miss?
Go, take the service, leaving me
To my lips' glad idolatry.
Pray ye and sing whilst I remiss
Gain more, and kiss, and kiss, and kiss!

SUNSHOWER

(FROM "THE OPIUM-EATER")

WARP of rain and woof of light,
Woven tapestry of might,
Veil of mystery whereon
Pictures fleet are wrought and gone—
Rich embroideries and fine,
Faces in a trance divine
At a moment caught to express
All of strength and loveliness,
All time's passion and delight
Or anguish sweetly infinite.

SONG

SOFTLY falls the moonlight,
The beacon-light of love,
And lightly on the tresses
Of the trees
The poising breeze
Sheds the passion of his kisses—
Lightly lest the leaves should move !

And the leaves forbear to quiver
Lest they mar the soft enchantment,
And they feed upon the giver
In a wondrous peace of bliss,
And softly the world widens
Through the star-ceiled floors of heaven,
And mortal bonds are riven
In the glory of a kiss.

TO OSWALD COULDREY

WHEN in dreams I shake you by the hand
And you smile so sadly, O my friend,
Summoned from afar to understand
What of love I never else could send
Since I cannot trust my hand to write
Or you to read what he may not indite.

Come you by your own volition, born
In the bee-like spirit, sensing home?
Or in love's long lariat caught and drawn,
Had you to my heart's will to succumb?
Sad are you so dragged from comrades new,
Or sad for our glad hours, alas! too few?

WINTER

WHEN the panes are ferned with frost,
And winter spurred rings all around,
And mounting his white steed, to boast,
Leaps nimbly from the crackling ground,
And well astride sits there and sings
Amid his charger's caperings—

“To horse! To horse!” my spirit cries,
Bent life and limb to jeopardy;
From Autumn dreams my heart he wakes
To see the pretty show he makes.

I love the Summer and the Spring
And Autumn's disillusioning;
But most I love the Winter brave
And his white steed—the gallant knave!

TO K. R.

NOW the starlings rise in roars
From the misty fields ;
Summer with his ripening stores
Unto Autumn yields ;
Autumn slow to hurt or brag,
Softly breaks his coloured flag.

Over each green citadel
Is his ensign seen ;
Summer bows, for all is well
In conquest so serene.
Peace, too, would he bring to me,
Could I walk here, my friend, with thee.

ZOE

A LONG delight,
A growing bliss,
With little blight,
Life's morning is.

A little pain,
And love's fleet boon
Brings life amain
To afternoon.

A waxing fear,
A waning bliss,
A dream unclear,
Life's evening is.

THE MAKING

NATURE, while thou didst sleep,
From thy rent side
God took a rib and built my frame, and deep
The breath of life applied
Unto my nostrils. And His breath subdued
The splendid dust, that in a little heap
His hands had clustered and imbued
With glory, kneading it and moulding fair,
Spreading it o'er the wondrous frame of bones
Fashioned from thee,
That He had builded there.
And when He saw my heart strike free
Did He pronounce
That I was passing good,
As once
He spake of Adam ?

But not the keen wild mood
And passion like the sun's,
That with thy bones inheriting I feel
Mastering my being through from brow to heel ;

Working my brain, than reason far more strong ;
Driving my heart ;
Pushing my spirit like a cloud aside,
Or urging it along ;
A restless prisoner forced to abide
'Twixt walls he ever buffeteth apart ;
Stirring wild joy and wilder brooding pain—
Not this hath He subdued,
Nor can set free again
Except He slay, defeat of what He planned !

But when thy spirit, Nature, moveth grand,
Serene and beautiful, His spirit glows
To meet thine like a lover undismayed,
And the twain greet awhile ;
Till thine, either of conquest sore afraid,
Or being coy and wanton, turns and grows
Wild, terrible.

Then is the battle in my being waged,
By truces oft suppressed, but never yet assuaged.

INSOMNIA

NIGHT, serene and infinite
Beyond thy restless nodes of light
And the white moon, that lower lies
To plumb the immeasurable skies,
The fathom-line full out—to miss
The depth of the bottomless abyss,
Where as above thou reignest now
Though the sun hide the stars below
From us, but unto thee afar
Winks in the dark, a trivial star.

Older than light, but ever young,
Send sleep, thy beautiful and strong
Son, to enfold my eyes and free
My soul that I be lost for thee.

THE CALL

WHERE darkling spreads the Irish Sea
I cry to thee, I cry to thee ;
And like the sea birds' call on high,
That seems to search the very sky
Empty,
My voice is uttered for no reply.

From rheumy rock and shaling track,
Echoing back, echoing back,
My call comes strangely, far and free,
In answer ; but so unlike thee
That I could flee
Despite the froward forbidding sea.

FLANDERS, 1915

MAN has the life of butterflies
In the sunshine of sacrifice;
Brief and brilliant, but more
Guerdon than the honeyed flower,
And **m**ore glory than the grace
Of their gentle floating pace.

RECOLLECTIONS

HOW green the Summer was, the sun
How boon between the leaves.

I still can hear the river run
And see the golden sheaves
Beyond, and the ripe labour done,
And the rut the wagon leaves.

I still can see the straining team
And slow-laborious men,
Each doing with the ease of dream
The waking work of ten;—
At least so did the labour seem
To my sweet leisure then.

I still can hear the millwheel vast
That turned the grinding stone,
And suddenly my heart beating fast
As it had never done :
I still can see two shadows cast
Before me by the sun.

OLD AGE

LIGHTLY and delicately fall
The wavering moments white,
And long life's rugged mountain tops
Have been forgotten quite,
Since time so surely covered them
With passion pure and bright.

TO SPRING

AN ODE

SWEET Springs—how ye can teach me to remember ;

—Ah ! would that ye could teach me to forget

The subtle secret worm that gnaweth yet,
The live still spark within the perished ember,
The weary promise broken all too oft,
The brittle splendours veiled in hope so soft

—With your bright days that laugh to scorn the
chill

Attempts of Winter to postpone them still
With childish threatenings of the next November !

Who is the lovely slender boy there, wooing
Between his curls ? The stripling, who is he
With all youth's perilous grace and symmetry
And the keen joy of love the still pursuing ?

—Regenerate Time? Can he be born again?
And she? faint Hope, with love-lorn features plain,
Can she outlive her reputation drear
And merciless again herself forswear?
—And Love again face all his sad undoing?

Who stretches out below the glistening beeches,
His limbs untanned by Winter, white and free
From Winter's furry casings, and in glee
Across the stops with nimble finger reaches,
Beating his sandalled foot to merry time?
—Or smiling gazes through the mellow rime,
And leaves his pipe to let sweet silence play
To his light-dancing dreams her roundelay,
Or listens to her tale's low-whispering speeches?

Ah, Pleasure! mid the dancers of the Valley
I often saw thy glowing face before,
Untimely Bacchus, leading a bright score
Of merry worshippers to dance and dally
—And neath the frowning of the silent hill
To wake upon the sorry morning chill
With aching brows. And with how little cheer
They bathed their temples in the water clear
Of ocean, kneeling on his margin shelly.

I, too, undrowsed, have bitterly repented,
And flung the weighted ivy from my hair,
And looped upon my quaking shoulder bare
The loose-slipped libbard-skin, and so tormented
In shame crept seaward. All the sweet disguise
Of Spring can never hide thee from my eyes—
Oh come, forgetfulness!—though bright day bars
And taut-drawn night with all her drumming stars
Maddens in her quiet fury discontented!

ST. JOHN

JOHN, the belovèd disciple,
 Leaned on Jesus' breast,
And he knew what another disciple feared
 And ten but dimly guessed.

The broken fragment of bread he took,
 And tasted flesh in the food ;
And then he took the wine-cup,
 And bitterly drank blood.

And the calm strong words of Jesus
 Seemed tremulous and far,
A motion of very desolate lips,
 The stifled voice of a star.

Alone he seemed in the Garden,
 Entranced at Jesus' side ;
And he felt his great heart broken,
 And his body crucified.

And they laid their hands upon him
That would so boldly stay ;
But he left in their hands his garment,
And naked he fled away.

THE RAINBOW

HEAVEN shines upon our tears,
A rainbow bright appears :
We grasp thereat amain !
Our tears are fled,
The rainbow vanishèd ;
Only the skies remain
Bright, like chafed pain.

Again, for rage, we weep,
And round the sunbeams sweep
Below the rising cloud,
And strike no more askance
Upon our petulance,
Lest it like grief grow proud,
So brightly bowed.

Heaven strikes the coloured bow
From tears, that man may know
 Of grief the brightest hues,
Lest joy as fair
Should hold him from despair
 And, by his soul's disuse,
 Even from God's House.

THE UNJEALOUS GOD

HE asked for love :

God offered him a friend.

“Nay, not this love,” said he ;

“But love to loosen, speed and bend

My heart like water to an ocean-end,

And not to hold my heart up steadily.

—This love for me !”

He asked for power :

God offered him a friend.

“Nay, not this power,” said he ;

“But power to gather, warp and rend

Earth from her grooves and make amend,

And not to keep earth spinning steadily.

—This power for me !”

God gave him all

He asked most bounteously ;

But, in the bitter end,
“ Take all Thou gavest, Lord,” cried he,
“ To my blind asking, still befriending me ;
And give me, Lord, lest I again offend
Thy heart, a friend ! ”

A friend he asked :
“ I am thy friend,” said He ;
“ So unto friendship’s end
I gave thee sorrowful love to free
Thy heart—and wouldst thou disacknowledge Me ?
—And power, to break thy heart up like red land
Clean to My Hand.”

“ Nay, Lord,” he cried,
“ My Master and my Friend !
Nay, nay, not only Thee,
But give me one whom I may bend
With love’s great burden and my heart extend ! ”
God laughed : gave readily :
“ How long ? ” said He.

PRIVILEGE

“ **W**HAT clothes are these ? ” said Peter at the Gate ;

“ As ye were born, alone ye enter here,
Clad on with truth, which is as water clear,
And purity as the air delicate,
Come ye of lowly estate ! ”

“ What hopes are these ? ” said Peter at the Door ;

“ Hopeless ye enter into this, God’s Place,
Being full of fear, like fire before God’s face,
As ye were born in good works very poor,
Ye sinners come before ! ”

ST. C.

GOD giveth man
All beauteous things,
That he may learn to lose them well,
Proving he can,
Mid many ruinings,
Stand sure himself and with true laughter dwell
On love that death may not dispel.

“ THAT HE BE DRAD ”

I HAVE been half-afraid,
I have been wholly sad,
Since pleasure which I made
Brings not the joys I had
Ere foolish I delayed
God's pleasure, need,
Which vexed my heart indeed,
But left my spirit glad.

I have been half-afraid
And wholly in despair,
Since love which I assayed
Proves not the hopes it bare,
Ere foolish I betrayed
God's love that rent
My heart up like a tent,
But left His Spirit there.

THE STAR FIELDS

BRIGHT cowslipped roods,
Grass-brilliant acres,
Where each wind broods
—Light glory-shakers !

Censer-swung and teeming gold,
Sacred blossoms manifold !
—Where like monks the hooded winds
Kneel, and like rich music rolled
Organ-silences unfold !

And the Lady kneeling, dim,
Harkens to the lustrous hymn
And the dark Priest beautiful—
Lifts her veil to look at him
—Fields with white mists all a-swim !

Fields of the night,
Deep-cowslipped, yellow—

THE STAR FIELDS

Brilliant with buttercup
O'erfloating tall,
Golden and flowermeal-scattering,
Honey-mellow,
Or, 'neath the moonbeam's flattering,
Virginal,
White like snow's fall.

(Fields of the day,
Hot lustrous leagues,
Goldmeal-ahaze,
Blue hyacinth-flooded,
Where walking gay
The sun fatigues,
And the nun-moon prays,
Wan, silvery-hooded.)

Fields of the night,
All primrose-sprent,
Breeze-fluttered, boon,
Bright-blossoming, shady,
Where walketh, white
With languishment,
The crippled moon,
Pale, piteous lady !

Clear voice of waters, silver tongue
—Thin waters over pebbles playing,
Pale-glimmering—and the voice was young
—What was the slender lady saying
While darkness like a lover hung ?

Brooks of the night,
Gray waters flowing,
Tissue-bright—
And silver-strowing,
'Twixt knowing Love
And strength unknowing !

THE STREAM O' DOON

AS I went by the stream o' Doon,
Where the brown warbler cheeps an' chups,
I' the stream I saw another afternoon
With all its flowery cups.

All green wi' grass that none could mow,
So rank and green and beautiful,
An' the flowers they grew so delicate below :
Not even time could cull.

And oh ! such skies ! and " Oh ! " said I,
" That afternoon can never pass ! "
But a breeze it came down, dim an' witheringly,
Like breath upon a glass.

'Twas upside down that world apart,
That fickle vanished afternoon !
An' I said, " God bless my silly channering heart ! "
Beside the stream o' Doon.

DREAMS

CLOSE and sweet they crowd upon me,
Soft rich notes of deep bird-piping,
Cool and mellow breath of blossoms
From their lustrous unstirred bosoms
Quietly as a spirit slipping,
And the warble of low waters
Feeling through the silent rushes,
In a dream mysterious tripping
—Soft as trip old Ladon's daughters
Lest they stir, as they flow by them,
Finger-dipping pendulous bushes,
And some uncouth Satyr spy them !

Thick and fast they crowd upon me,
Rapid wild sweet waves of dreaming,
And through burning odorous hazes
Peer upon me lovely faces
Bubble-like down waters streaming !
In a moment I have builded
Palaces of cool green splendour

Washed about by rivers teeming,
Diamond-towered and star-guilded,
For one lovely maid that stayeth ;
But before embraces tender
All to ruin soft decayeth.

Visions swell and break upon me—
I am sand to their foam-curving,
And beneath their snowy whisper
All my being waxes crisper ;
Far to Lapland regions swerving !
There I brood the wizard-master,
In high-pilèd sea-green mansion,
Lustrous, resonant, voice-unnerving :
White and cold as alabaster
Blue-haired ice-maids pause before me,
But before my heart's expansion.
Melt and sadly I deplore me.

Strewn with rosy spray upon me
Falls an airy pendulous breaker—
I am rapt to glassy ledges,
Narrow-terraced mountain edges,

Where the wind is loud earth-shaker !
And through crag-hung clouds, unblinded
By the arrowy light that splinters
From the smitten rocks, glad seeker
I behold in shadow-brinded
Vale my prey, and plunge to choose her,
From the height of stagnant winters
Eagle-like—but wake and loose her !

THE WOODMAN

DOUBTING the woodman leans upon his axe
—To catch the Nightingale's first flutings
low!

And with his horny hand's back wipes his brow
Of the salt sweat, and feels his heart relax,
And all its strength run down like melting wax,
And his crude wood-life reeling from him now!
And wets his palm and strikes a sterner blow,
Chiding his heart, until the tall tree cracks!

Then in the cool of evening walking home,
Again he hears adown the gloaming glade
The rapt outburst which made his heart afraid;
And smiles to see his rosy children come,
Racing to win his axe and kisses, from
His cottage doorway glowing through the shade.

MY MOTHER

(DIED APRIL 19, 1915)

DEAR Mother, why when I remember thee
Hath loss no bitterness, no pangs regret?
Oh! why do I so happily forget
How I so little strove to keep life free
From trouble's toils—nay rather, thoughtlessly
Flung trouble o'er thee, a death-weighted net
And watched thee hapless perish there? And yet,
Sweet Mother, still thou smilest so on me.

At first I did beseech thy spirit come
And with upbraiding rend my heart, and tear
Sorrow's quick growth with sorrow's constant
share,
Lest it should close my heart in like a home.
For so, methought, grief only can o'ercome
Grief—till I saw thee smiling, Mother dear.

THE VALLEY OF DESOLATION

THE pines to their turrets are shaken,
The wind, blithe old sexton, is clanging
Their beautiful bells :
The music goes leaping and hanging,
Like apes, down the valley forsaken,
And cheerily answering echoes
Ring back from invisible cells—
Where wan Desolation
With weird invitation
Inscrutably dwells.

But shouldst thou set foot in the valley,
And tempted by love or by anger
Shouldst linger and stay,
Too soon will the bells lose their clangour,
For breath the old sexton will dally,
Then toll from the shuddering belfry
The knell of dismay :
And well wert thou guarded,
If still unrewarded
Thou winnest away !

TO DESPAIR

AN ODE

DAUGHTER of Sorrow unto Failure born,
Sweet only sister, delicate Despair,
Amid thy towery brethren Virtue fair,
Strong Courage and Success, and Hope forlorn :
—Thou whom that amorous Roman once preferred
In Egypt; thou whose tender voice was heard
By Chatterton between his bursts of song,
When all his dolorous woodland dripped with
wrong,
And his bright stars were in their courses blurred.

O thou sweet charmer, whom 'tis death to kiss,
And death to woo and death to disregard,
Death to invite at all, death to retard,
Sure death to have and certain death to miss,
Death to remember and forget, alack !

O thou !—glad Orpheus' hapless looking back
—His lost Eurydice—Love's haunting ghost,
—Life's weary sail and ever-fading coast
—Death's mistress and his horror brooding black !

How long I feared to look upon thy face,
Deeming it haggard, woebegone and wild,
And with closed eyes was fain to be beguiled
By thy soft-warbled mysteries, to pace
As thy blind priest along the sacred grove
And in the sweetest awe which is not love,
Or being love was more of worship, dwell
Upon each oft-repeated syllable
That never could its full of sweetness prove.

But now I have unbound thy fragrant hair,
And blinded with its darkness my faint eyes :
Around my throbbing throat one long loop lies,
Love's tender-strangling halter, knotted there !
Upon thy lovely languid face how long
I looked, till looking in a passion strong
Grew blind with envy ! But thy hair blew in
Between thy lips and mine, a barrier thin
But most availing—sweet Despair, how long ?

So sadly did you answer to my call,
Like music over weary waters blown
From lands where happiness remains alone,
While round the seaward ship the shadows fall ;
And ah ! so sweetly did you look and smile,
As on the lofty stern a proud exile
Still looks towards his country, breaking through
His generous rage with all his heart's adieu,
Guessing at her imagined capes the while.

BOAR'S HILL

THE Knight of Wootton harked to the tale,
And his eyes grew bright and his face grew
hale,
And he cried with his great glad voice of old
To his ready Page in buff and gold :
“ Call me huntsman and horse and hound,
And wind me the horn with a merry sound !
For they say a boar has showed his teeth
Among the thickets of Tommy's Heath ;
And we will hunt, through glade and fell,
Over the hills to Sunningwell.”

The Knight of Wootton gat him to horse,
And they beat the woods and they beat the gorse.
They hunted far and they hunted wide,
But never a tusky boar they spied.
They rode by Chillswell to Oxenford,
And the hounds turned back of their own accord.

They stirred the hart and they stirred the hare
Over the Hurst. No scent was there.
And they rode and scattered, as it befell,
Over the hills to Sunningwell.

The Knight of Wootton checked his roan
Close on the hounds. He rode alone.
—For he saw them lean their muzzles blue,
And pause as they rushed the thickets through.
He heard them mutter, he heard them break,
And he laughed aloud at the musical sound.
He saw their bristling chines awake ;
Merrily his horn he wound,
And cleared the shallow brook at a bound,
And laid his mare out low and long
Over the mossy crackling ground.
He followed fast, for the scent was strong ;
And he laughed aloud at the musical sound.

The Knight of Wootton was old and gray,
Haggard and sick and woebegone ;
But you had said he was young that day
As he rode ahead and he rode alone.
For his cheek was ruddy, his eye was bright,
And he sate in the saddle firm and light ;

And his mighty back was no more bowed,
And his breast grew broad as he laughed aloud,
Tossing his tasselled hunting-cap ;
And he held his spear without a strap
With hand as firm as a boy's might be
—A hand that a breeze had seemed to blow,
Blow like the branch of a poplar tree
But few short dismal hours ago.
And he tarred his hounds with words of grace,
And he leaned to his mare's pricked ears to tell
Sooth and praise, as she kept her pace,
Galloping up from Sunningwell.

The Knight of Wootton breathed again,
And his heart came back to him that day ;
And only he drew the bridle rein
When the hounds had brought their foe to bay,
And the boar hunched there had showed his teeth
Down in the hollow by Tommy's Heath,
And torn the hounds as they made assay.
He patted his panting mare, and leaped,
Lightly leaped from the saddle bow,
Where men had lifted him old and heaped
But few short dismal hours ago.
And he ran through the bleeding hounds and smote,
Strongly smote with his mighty spear,

The boar to heart through his bristly coat,
'Twixt jowl and shoulder clean and clear.
Then a moment he leaned on the quivering shaft,
A moment brief, and lightly laughed,
And slowly bended his hoary head
And over the stricken boar fell dead.
And the hounds came round and licked his hands,
And the roan mare whinnied, sad to tell,
And there came a sound of his hunting bands
Gathering up from Sunningwell.

The Knight of Wootton was old and dead
When Ralph, the Huntsman, lifted him up.
"This was the death to die!" he said,
And shook from his eye the heavy drop.
Then he put his horn to his lips a-cold,
And a mournful huntsman's call he wound;
And the slender Page in buff and gold
Wept aloud at the musical sound:
—Wept aloud, though his heart was bold
And long had chidden the gathered tear;
And he hid not now the tears that rolled
As he kissed the lips of his master dear.

The Knight of Wootton is armed and laid
In the Chappelle old by Lamborough Hill,

And his face looks happy and unafraid
In the candle light so tall and still.
At his head shall be a carven hound,
At his feet a boar.—But they ring the bell,
And far is carried the musical sound
Over the hills to Sunningwell.

THE STRINGLESS LYRE

I

SAD tuneless lyre, above thy widowed shape
Haunts music like the shadow of thy lord,
And thou from Silence canst no more escape
Nor Silence leaves thee of his own accord,
Strong undesired lover. Who hath left
Thee lorn of resonant strings and so bereft
Of native strength to strike his bended nape
With all the sunsure aim of one bright chord?

II

Yet who dares take the sweetest chords he can,
And pitying string thy weary frame once more,
—Not for his own unhallowed tunes to span?
Can he thy wonted master-hand restore,
Who haply, knowing what thy fate would be,
Doomed thee to silence, but still made thee free
From lesser music and the prouder man,
—Thee, that hadst borne such mighty themes
before?

III

Ah, who can tell who wooed thee long ago
Till waves seemed breaking on a barren shore
In all the anguish of their bitter snow,
Running with melancholy fringes hoar
Upon the rippled sand, and sighing dead?
—Who felt within his heart the passion dread,
The harsh insistent grains of bitter woe
That peaceful song makes pearls of evermore?

IV

Belike blind Homer's magic hand of old
Swept battle o'er thee in soft thunders fine,
Or with a dreaming finger uncontroll'd
Touched thee to tender notes of love divine
And sweet familiar household manners mild,
Bare-headed Hector and his laughing child,
Or hapless Helen when from Troy she told
Her foe-friends in the Spartan battle line.

V

Perchance the Lesbian found among thy strings
The purest passion of her haunted song
And sacred echoes of too lovely things,
Or Aischylos his rugged music strong.

Alas! the sane-sweet Attic days are dead,
And all that marble splendour long since fled,
And thou, amid Time's precious ruinings,
Thyself almost to ruin dost belong.

VI

Too full for music are these empty days;
Too late for glory, since they hurry so;
Too sane for love's wise folly and life's praise;
Too sure for happiness. Ah! long ago
Thou mightest yet have found a hand to save
Thee fitly from thy doom, a singer grave,
Shakespeare or Shelley, with his fearless lays—
But what bright trembler so could save thee now?

VII

Remain, quiet memory of the timeless past,
For unaccepted Silence still to woo,
A sad Penelope: the years have cast
A hopeless sort of hope upon thee too.
Still somewhere hangs that mighty bow undrawn;
Still sometime down the rosy tracks of dawn
Unknown thy travelled lord returns at last;
—Till then, brave patient Heart, till then, adieu!

QUICUNQUE VULT

A LONG the woodland went that lonely fellow,
With lady's features, tresses overlong,
When flowers were scant and leaves were turning
yellow ;
And sorrowful his looks were unto song.

There was a seeming in the air,
So never-to-be-satisfied a yearning,
A sense of a sad finish everywhere,
—He almost felt the leaves so slowly turning !
—Dissatisfaction in the full fruition,
A loss of growth that fullness brought like pain,
The dullest end of dullest repetition,
—He too felt Autumn like a gradual stain,
Vain end of all things vain !

And slowly went that solitary fellow,
With his sad lovely face and haunted eyes,
When leaves hung scarce and last fruit over-mellow,
And trees like antlers moved upon the skies.

There was weak anger in the air,
An insufficiency the most appalling,
Feckless rebellion trivial everywhere
—He felt the last leaves' growing fear of falling !
—A voice raised soundless against dissolution,
And upon death a roused unbaffled dread,
The purgeless pitiless end of long pollution,
—He too had failed like this: he bowed his
 head,
Dead, burying his dead !

Below the woodland slept that lonely fellow,
With quiet contented face so very fair,
Recking not of the ramping winds that bellow
And toss about his leaf-entangled hair.

There was a sorrow in the air,
A strength tremendous, furiously blowing
Lest its great heart should burst for anguish
 there,
—Surely he felt the new spring softly growing !
A very tender sense of things forgotten,
A memory very choice and very sweet,
The incorruptible amid things rotten.
—He will not hear the silly seasons fleet
Meet passing at his feet !

SEA-RUNE

I LOVE the flowerful hollows
Beside the humming sea,
Where sometimes the spray follows
The winds in flaky glee,
Whence sometimes the wind carries
The breath of flowers he marries
Back to the brideless sea.

I love the waving grasses
Beyond the beaming waves,
Where ocean never passes
For all the quiet he craves,
Where the white mists are weaving
Soft dreams for his deceiving
—Sweet wraith-pools of dead waves.

And there I would be dwelling
Above the silent sea,
When lowest-winds are telling
That ancient mystery
Of how the earth grew bridal
With such a sore betidal,
So sorrowful the sea.

I love the ledgy spaces
Below the cropping crags,
Where winds have eagle-faces
And fetlocks like a stag's,
 Where silence long was broken
 Before a word was spoken,
And sound was ere the crags.

Where Ocean's threats the loudest
Come muffled up like prayers,
And all his triumph proudest
Mounts moanful like despairs,
 When in a careless passion
 The crags in Idol-fashion
Gaze o'er the seeming prayers.

And there would I be dwelling
Above the purposed sea
When loudest winds are knelling
That ancient prophesy
 Of how the waves shall cover
 Those careless crags all over,
And they beseech the sea.

ITHURIEL

CRUSHED 'neath a weight of snow
Bushes lie heaped and low ;
The tall trees overhead
White dust of thunder shed.
—Lapses tremendous
So fall and bend us.

We who were bent before,
All our strength straining sore,
How should we now sustain
This gathered fall of pain ?
—Angels, attend us !
And God, defend us !

Burden so heaped and white,
So weighed beyond our might,
Who gave us strength to bear
Or held the burden there ?
—Strength so stupendous
Could our hearts lend us ?

Snows melt, unshoulders pain,
Proudly we rise again,
And all our thanks dispel.
—*We* bore the burden well !
—Sad angels, shrive us !
And God, forgive us !

VENITE

COME to the lands of happy weariness,
Where folk with sweet pale faces and sad eyes
Live as to softest music, and the press
Of ritual toil is like a Sacrifice!

Come to the lands that to thy distant viewing,
Like hot Arabian deserts, naked glow—
And the thick business of constant doing
Will never let the cheerful grasses grow.

Come to the deserts then and soon therefrom
Thy fields of pleasure shall more wasteful seem.
For once look back and thou shalt joyous come,
Nor to look back again shalt ever dream.

OCH HONE !

“ COME back,—come back to Erin ! ”
Ye winds, why will ye cry,
And ye sad birds go calling
Across the cloudy sky ?

“ Come back—come back to Erin ! ”
Ye seas, why will ye call,
Until my tears run streaming
And whisper as they fall ?

“ Come back—come back to Erin ! ”
The green fields and the streams,
The rain so softly falling,
The sky so far that gleams ! ”

“ Come back—come back to Erin ! ”
My thoughts why do ye press ?
And thou, my soul, go sighing
In such fond weariness ?

Oh bring my heart from Erin,
Ye winds and birds and seas
Oh bring my heart from Erin,
And let my soul have peace !

COULOIR

SNOW TEMPTATION

WHITE with snow the world is :
—Have a care !
Sleepy death uncurled is,
Prowleth there !
Bright of acre,
Open pasture,
Unclaimed vasture !
—Who shall dare ?

Clean inviting smoothness :
—Ware to tread !
Level untracked sootherness
Calls ahead,
Pure of passage !
Letless travel !
Ways unravel—
Who will tread ?

Big birds lightly cross it :
—Mark it well !
So doth hope engross it
With a spell,
Firm for footing !
Brittle places
Show no traces !
—Who can tell ?

All the level deep is,
—Welladay !
Cloying soft as sleep is,
Warm they say,
Tender fathoms,
Hidden hollows
—Ah ! who follows ?
Come away !

THE BOXWOOD CUP

WHEN like a clear reflection all the world
Shone through the water-white still April
air,

He brought his lustrous bride between the pines
—The fragrant pines. All mossy was the ground
And broken through with brake-frond still uncoiled ;
Delicate like languor pale anemones
Drooped o'er the placid sturdier primrose-tufts.
Oh, how he loved to watch the cringing moss
Win in like water 'twixt her silver toes,
The daffodils bend broken like his heart
Before her sweet choice stepping, and the trees,
In their long brazen ranks, salute their Queen
With motionless regard ! Barefoot they clomb,
Unsandalled like Delight who sometimes treads
With bleeding feet and laughter mid the thorns.
And there beside the forest's edge they came
Upon the pasture, and his native hut

All poled about with pine, and planked with fir,
And thatched with braided bracken, and for door
Hung with a mighty ox-hide thonged and barred
And weighted with a beam in the broad hem.

Before the little hut they laid them down,
He with his slender limbs already tanned
And showing, where his shifted bear-skin looped
At his new posture, the pure skin above
The furthest pushed brown boundaries of the sun,
And she all ivory fair, as though the sun
Full fain had dared not ; his thick clustering curls
Like darkness and his pine-tops, hers all gold.

Anon the little curious lambs would come
And watch them bound together, bleating still,
Then run back leaping to their anxious dams ;
Or birds would settle on the neighbouring shrubs,
But startled fly as those red lips once more
Partook of mutual sweetness.

When the sun
Had his red chin already on the west,
He rose, bent down, with kisses raised her up ;
And so till dusk they parted. He to tend
His flocks strode out across the dewy grass,
And she to set his supper went within.

Dim was her woodland palace when she looped
The curtain back and, like a sweet white ghost

Belated creeping back to her still tomb
When day already rolls into the sky,
Slipped from the rosy twilight. And within
She nothing saw at first but shadowy shapes,
And in the westward wall upon the planks
The knots dull rubious glowing, and red chinks
Of light where'er the caulking wood and clay
Had crumbled from the seams. But when her eyes
Had widened to the darkness, she beheld
His broad-strewn bed of bracken, and thereon
A heavy-manèd tawny lion's hide ;
And leaned beside the head his hunting spears
With burnished edgy points and tapery shafts
All notched and very curiously wrought.
There hung his arrows fletched, his girdle thong
With flask and scrip, and his forgotten pipe ;
And, on a little shelf, fixed fungus-like
Upon the central pine pole, proudly stood
A boxwood cup carved o'er with lovely shapes
And mellow legends, haply a fair prize
That he among the shepherds of the dale
Had won, from fellow swains all sick at heart
And pitying old men's judgment ;—or perchance
The hope-gift of some buxom shepherdess.
And further showed a few fat skins of wine,
A jar with white milk brimming, clear scooped gourds,

A pestle and a hollowed stone wherein
Still rested a few broken grains of wheat,
A canister for bread and lidded close ;
And figs and raisins and things else unseen
Along a low recess. Beside the door
A blackened hollow with white ashes strewn
Showed where the hearth danced when the brattling
rain
Forbade the woods for burning.

On the turf
Beside the little track his feet had worn.
She set his supper.

Suddenly he came
Upon the gloom, and at his breast he bore
A little weanling lamb. And glad at heart
She ran to meet him, took the little lamb,
And heard the Mother bleating come behind.
Then, when the ailing creature was bestowed
With its contented mother in the cote,
They supper made; then leaning on his breast
The while he fed her choice and rosy lips
With frugal dainties, and with kisses oft,
Breaking her pretty speeches and his heart.
And, supper done at last, they went within,
And from her pearly shoulder he unclasped
Her vesture, and undid her fragrant zone,

And laid her down in her white loveliness
Upon his bed. She with eye-worship watched
Him loose his girdle and his bearskin coat,
And godlike glow upon him through the gloom.

Soon round the beams beside them bright-eyed
mice

Ran peeping unafraid, or pausing, washed
Their little pointed faces, or perchance
Strayed out upon the lion-hide and found
A scattered grain of bread, and squatting up
Held it in both their small unmannered hands
Upon their nibbling mouths. For there they lay,
Silent and wan like two faint lustrous clouds
Upon a moonlight night, which the soft wind
Commingles once below the watching stars,
And dawn shall find them single evermore.

Now, on a languid summer day it chanced
That, as he leaned staff-propped and watched her
grind

The yellow wheat grains in the hollow stone
To make the home-baked bread he loved so well,
One came upon them with his languid limbs
Thrown o'er the withers of a dappled mare,
They being unwary till his shadow fell
Almost like chill upon them. Richly dight

With jewels was the harness of his mare,
And he in a fine broidered tunic clad,
And gaitered sandals bound with gilded straps
All crosswise to the knee and gartered fair.
And he—a slender very graceful boy
With golden curls, brow banded, and between—
A handsome discontented face divine.
“Ho, shepherd!” cried he in a mellow voice
That would have stirred the nymphs of Arcady.
And in a proud humility, afraid,
The shepherd answered, “Good, my lord!”—He saw
His bride’s bright eyes to take the stranger in.
And then the Prince: “Good lack, thou cheerless
man!
What better place with such a hostess sweet
Could I have found to wile a tedious noon
Away in. Take the mare!” Therewith he threw
The reins upon the shepherd’s waiting hand,
And lightly slipped to ground with all a faun’s
Most subtle sinewy woodland grace, and all
Of mortal beauty. Laughing still he spoke:
“Go tend thy flocks and mend thy rueful looks
The while I play thy wooer in the shade,
Till fitly and with gentle smiles renewed
Thou comest to reclaim thy hapless bride.”
So all noon long the rueful shepherd strode

Among his flocks—nay 'neath the forest eaves
Concealed kept jealous watch upon his lord,
Resenting almost that his modest wife
So sweetly held at truth's firm length away
The lovely prince, while he so little pressed
Of treachery upon her.—Heard him praise
The sweet white wheaten bread, and ground his
teeth ;

For who should praise that wheaten bread but he ?
—Watched her pour out the laughter-throated wine
—His wine !—that she should pour it, well !—for
whom

But him ?—to share the boxwood cup with her !
—Enough ! At every motion the Prince made
He drew an arrow to the barbèd point,
Then at her smiles would turn the point on her
—And slay himself a hundred thousand times
For doubting !

But when veiled evening came
Upon the hot red desert of the west,
Bearing aloft upon her steady brow
The pitcher with sweet cool-drawn water filled,
The Prince arose and wound his silver horn,
A merry summoning. Right gladly then
Crept back the shepherd through the darkling woods
And came as from the pasture speeding up,

Led forth the mare and held the Prince's foot
As lightly he bestrode her,—anxious he
As the pawing mare to have his master gone.
Then gaily called the Prince, waving adieu,
And proudly down the woodland pranced away.

He marked her flushing cheek and brightened eyes,
And she his frown and surly humour marked
And first rebuked him lightly, asked him why
He came so late returning from the flocks
And had not served or shared the frugal meal,
But left her there for host and hostess both,
A double labour. Sorely he replied :
“ I could not trust myself to sit beside
Or stand behind him, lest my fingers grew
Too strong, his throat too tempting.—Double toil ?
—A single joy !—Thou gavest him more smiles
Than honest serving needed !—I to share
The meal—And did'st thou call me from the dale
To share it ? Could I share thy pleasure too ?
—Nay spoil it rather ! ” Angry then she grew.
“ A proper husband thou to leave thy wife
To meet temptation, if temptation was,
Alone, since thou so little trust hast got
In her behaviour ! Wherefore shouldst thou fear
A better man than thou ? Belike thou hast

Another maiden whom thou callest wife,
That so thou judgest." Bitterly she spake
And went within to bed, while in the grass
Sullen he lay and brooding—"Could the Prince
So stoop? Alas! what need of stooping there?
Ah, would she were less beautiful or I
Less jealous!" Thus till all the pricking stars
Like points of yellow envy filled the sky,
And now the risen moon had paled them out
To whiter passion, he lay brooding there.

Now bright Orion with his triple belt
Held the mid skies, and bats like bitter thoughts
That downward long below the drooping eaves
Had hung suspended, fluttered on the air,
—Such silly, darting, unsubstantial things,
Twittering. He laughed, and felt upon his knees
The chilly dews, and coldness in his hair.
Shivering he rose ashamed, and light at heart
With love unclouded like the sudden moon,
And crept on tiptoe through the lowly door
At last. She slept!—with one white arm out-
spread

Where his lorn neck should be, her other hand
Rocked like a little gull upon her breast,
And on her lips a happy smile for him
Forgiven. Silently he doffed his skins

And lay down softly, kissed her parted lips,
And also fell asleep. And still the moon
Shone through the open doorway where the hide
Hung gathered yet.

Now as he slept he dreamed
That men came on him darkly in the night,
And long he strove with them like Hercules ;
Then by their numbers overpowered at last
Was bound and mocked and beaten and left for dead.
But with faint frenzied eyes he saw them bear
His lovely, hapless, struggling wife away,
And helpless into utter darkness fell.
Ah, broken slumber !

Heavily he awoke
When noon, that bright Colossus, strode the world,
With pain like iron bands across his brow,
Supine upon the ground, his comely head
Bent back upon the hearth, his black hair filled
Like age with ashes, and his aching sides
All wealed and flecked and fleered with clotted blood.
Dazed he awoke, far back in other days
While still he was unwedded in the dale
And singly went among his lambs and ewes.
But soon he saw her raiment on the floor,
And fragrant zone. Then memory came back
With cruel anguish, like the surge of blood

To chafed stone-frozen limbs, or savage life
Returning cruelly to hapless men
Nigh drowned upon the shore, reluctant death
Preventing.

Now he crawled on hands and knees,
And threw himself face downward on the bed,
And drummed with his dull feet, and with his hands
Clutched and reclutched the tawny lion's mane.
Then godlike from his sorrows he arose,
Like young Poseidon rising first, serene
To allay the storming waters ; filled his cup ;
Drank the refreshing wine ; and spite of pain
Stood upright on his feet. He took her zone
And covered it with tears like stars between
His rapid cloudy kisses. And then fled
Far out upon the woodland, calling, calling,
Until he fainting fell.

Now after noon
His wondering flocks came browsing up the hill
And found their shepherd lying stark asleep.
The fond ewes nuzzled round him, and the lambs
Thrust in against his flanks their woolly heads,
Kneeling and flickering their happy tails
As when they draw the sweet milk from their dams.
—But when he stirred not, in a curious ring
Stood sadly bleating, until evening fell.

GRACE

“ **I** WAS the need of someone’s heart ;
I was the heart of someone’s grief ;
I was the grief of someone’s smart ;
I was the smart of no one’s life.”
Say this and to thy grave depart.
If truly this thou canst not say
Then shouldst thou fear to die to-day.

“ I was the friend of someone’s fear ;
I was the fear of someone’s foe ;
I was the foe of no one’s cheer ;
I was the cheer of someone’s woe.”
Say this to Death, and do not fear.
If truly this thou canst not say,
Then for a respite kneel and pray.

TO MUSIC

SWEET Music, come upon me as thou wilt,
All thundrous like the fall of waters vast,
Or softly spilt
Like stringèd drops of water tinkling fast
Into melodious pools that seem
The very gazing eyes of some delicious dream.

Or come in silence, hung with melody
Like droppy trees when morning mists flew low
Are secretly
By their four corners gathered, and the slow,
Sweet operation of the day sucks up,
Ere it can lightly fall, each lustre-tinted drop.

Or like still tears that make no sound at all,
Save in the secret heart, how thick soe'er
They haply fall
For joy or more melodious sorrow there.
Then from thy soundless ecstasy awake
To the soft almost silence that the raindrops make.

Rise softly as the dews upon my soul ;
For in thy sweetest hush I love thee best.
My heart console—
That cavepool still—with dewdrop-quiet unrest
Of joy, or with the deeper-falling rain,
The solace delicate of unconsolèd pain.

SONG FROM "LIFE"

AH fond Regret !
How like a river yet
Thou dost reflect lost sweetness
With more than all completeness—
Ah sweet, ah fond Regret,
That dost too much remember and so much forget !

Ah fond Regret !
How like a cloud, dead-set,
Thou dost obscure past trouble
Lest it too well redouble—
Oh sweet, oh fond Regret,
That dost too much remember and too much forget !

THE DREAM

SOFTLY came a dream to me,
Softly as a flower dispetals,
Softly as a white owl settles,
Softly came to my life's tree.

Like a leaf that falleth light,
Like a feather loosed in flight,
Like a snowflake floating white
Softly dropped that dream from me.

Who can tell
Where it fell?

I have searched the airy region
All about me with such passion,
Feathers found and leaves in legion,
But that melting snowflake never,
Nor that leaf, nor petal falling,
Nor a feather of that fashion ;
I find only things that sever—
At more searching more appalling
—Me from my lost dream for ever.

THE SEA

FAR out the glittering ripples ran,
The quivering molten-metal sea,
Beyond the broadening flats of tan
Above the furnace none may scan
Below the sunshine free.

And like hot steam the throbbing air
Shook o'er that mighty molten flood,
That night makes black and starry fair,
Or like a cold quicksilver rare,
And dawn turns into blood.

And day makes livid and pale gold,
Yellow and tiger-black between,
With silver-crashing waves unrolled
—Visible thunders manifold,
From furnacings unseen.

HE

A RIME OF PARALLELS

HAPPY he was,
Till his selfish heart
Seemed like a cloud
Heavy and swart,
And the little worm
At his soul's dull core
Mid the dust of her boring
Stirred once more.

Sorry he was,
Till the clouds of woe
So tenderly let
The sunshine thro',
And his hollowed soul
Like an apple fell
For new bloom to break
And fresh fruit to swell.

Wise he was,
Till his haughty mind
Came upon death
And bowed behind,
And the lazy snake,
Coiled in his brain,
Casted his slough
And coiled again.

Doubtful he was,
Till the pride of death
Stooped like love
To his mind beneath,
And faith arose
From his brain, awake,
And set his heel
On the plaited snake.

CREATION DAYS

LAUDATE

*C*HERUBIM. God stretched His hand upon the
brooding dark,

Scraphim. Glory in the Highest, Glory and Worship
be !

Cher. —And light was kindled like a spark
Among the shadows of Eternity.

Ser. Praise be to God, eternal Praise,
For this, the Kindling and the First of Days !

Ch. God frowned upon the undivided flood,

Ser. Glory in the Highest, Glory and Worship be !

Ch. And like a lofty ceiling stood
The purple firmament inviolably.

Ser. Praise be to God, eternal Praise
For this, the Sundering, Second of His Days !

Ch. God looked upon the waters gleaming wide,

Ser. Glory in the Highest, Glory and Worship be !

Ch. And laughing waters leaped aside,

And earth was bridal earth, sea bridegroom sea.

Ser. Praise be to God, Eternal Praise.

For this, the Gathering, and the Third of Days !

Ch. God smiled upon the firmament forlorn,

Ser. Glory in the Highest, Glory and Worship be !

Ch. And night and day like twins were born,

With sun and moon for crowns continually.

Ser. Praise be to God, eternal Praise

For this, the Enthroning, and the Fourth of
Days.

Ch. God touched His lips, and in the waters moved—

Ser. Glory in the Highest, Glory and worship be !

Ch. —Great whales, and from the waters roved

All flocks of wingèd fowl in their degree.

Ser. Praise be to God, eternal praise

For this, the Assorting and the Fifth of Days.

Ch. God sighed, and from the earth arose—

Ser. Glory in the Highest, Glory and worship be !

Ch. —Amid the fragrant forest's rich repose,
Creature and creeping thing innumerably.

Ser. Praise be to God, eternal Praise
For this, the Haunting and the Sixth of Days !

Ch. God wept—and from that moment man was
made,

Ser. Glory in the Highest, Glory and Worship be !

Ch. Ah so Breath-brilliant and so dust-afraid,
Godlike and earthborn intermittently !

Ser. Praise be to God, eternal Praise
For this, the Keening and the Last of Days.

SATURN

HOW golden were the days that I regret,
'Ere Boyhood like a Saturn feckless fell
Out of my life, and his ambitious child,
Manhood, the blind usurper, there had set
Like Jove his jealous sovereignty—to dwell
In constant dread of his own children wild,
His Hopes and Fears and Passions and Despairs,
Huge Titans! building still against his lot
Their mountainous ascent of monstrous cares,
Though he in wrath had smitten them and piled
Torments upon them but subdued them not.

Ah Saturn! very golden were those days,
And like a happy legend to be read
In antique language and time-mellowed phrase
Between the brodered margins of old books;
Or like a quiet religion long since dead,
Which one discovers with still pious looks

Haply among the littered leaves of time,
And, brooding on quaint rites and worship spent
And broken sanctities, dreams off, sublime
Of prayer soft-murmuring out like water-brooks,
And raised hands, and sweet admonishment.

—The woodland space, the native kneeling throng,
The flower-strewn silence, the slow-swaying priest,
The Altar stoked with sweet-wood faggots fine,
The fragrance of the oils thick poured, the strong
Quick holding of the breath, the hearts increased,
The sudden kindling of the fire divine!
Hark! now the priest intones the mystic prayer
And on the crackling wood and flame full-stored
Sprinkles the hissing leaves, till all the air
Thickens; and through the solemn prayer's
confine
The little kid bleats straining at his cord.

Ah! golden days when Boyhood like a Priest
To Life's high altar haled his victim shy,
His Innocence, and soon with solemn prayer
Kindled his fragrant joys, not with the least
Repugnance heard that bleating faintly die!
Nor sickened that sweet smoke upon the air;

But mid his piping hopes and dancing throng
Of unforeseeing thoughts high cloyed and glad,
And seeming-sacred ecstasies of song,
 Watched with rapt eyes consume to ashes there
His life's best gift mid all the joys he had.

THE SLEEPER

AWAKE! although thy dreams are passing
sweet,

And day to thee like everlasting night

A brooding cherub whose soft pinions meet

Enfolding stars and shadowy delight

Above thee, still awake! The day is bright

And thou, fond slumberer, lovest more than dreams

E'er brought in their dim unsubstantial night,—

The glory of the leaves, the birds, the streams,

The flower's fragrance fine,

The cloudy pomp divine,

The sun and shadows dancing on his beams,

The silent strength that broods

From mountained solitudes

And like the mighty soul of music seems,

And the fine spirit which doth move

Through all, the enkindling soothing Breath of

Love.

Awake ! for evening fills the freckled skies
Already : thou hast dreamed the noon away !
And like a sweetness wooing slumber lies
About the fountains of the birds that play
Against the tender spell and will not stay—
Admonishment for thee that sleepest still
And hast not borne the love-heat of the day—
Awake before the shadows from the hill
Wedge farther the black night
Into the rosy light,
And darkness drains the pale green calms that fill
From oceans of the west
The shallow loveliest
Hollows of sky, and the first stars distill
Their liquid glories delicate—
Ah slumberer, thou awakenest too late !

Sleep on ! for gathering her sable robe
Night fills the vacant throne of regal day,
His widowed consort, 'neath the moon's pale globe,
Amid her starry court ; but puts away
The heavy business—what her minions say
Being but like the senseless drone of wind
Or wordless talk of waters hurrying gray.

Below the sombre vaulting of her mind,
 As in the pregnant gloom
 Of his mysterious tomb,
Lies her dead lord, and there she leans to find
 All that death still can tell
 To make her miserable,
To kiss the cold responseless lips unkind,
 And in grief's utter loneliness
 To win strange solace from her grief's excess.

Thou couldst not wake ! Death had thee in his
 keeping !

 And is death gentle that thou smilest so
Through lovely visions of that silent sleeping
 And shadowy darkness ? Warm and soft, as
 snow

 With his white fatal blanket, slumber slow
Covers thee still ? Then I so well contented,
 Poor fool, bent down to kiss thy tender brow
Good-night. 'Twas marble-cold ! And so demented

 Beyond all anguish wild,
 Cold, griefless, piteous-mild,
As one endrowsed with opiates heavy-scented,
 I gazed upon the bed
 Whence death so surely had fled,
—Till life seemed all by laughter circumvented.

I shook my fingers on the air,
And laughed upon the heavens in gay despair.

Thou canst not die! My heart like Hercules
Hath wrestled for thee through the dreary day,
Till he hath bended death back on his knees
And rescued thee Alkestis-like away,
And bidden thee good-night, as well he may,
Knowing that morning still shall see thee rise
Like Aphrodite through the creaming spray,
With all Spring's loveliness within thine eyes!
And in a sweet unrest
Through long night, undistressed,
He watches for thy first awakening sighs;
Nor hath he drooped his head,
Though night, unwidowèd
Hath left her throne—for dawn is in the skies
And rosily her lord doth break
Death's bonds! O happy slumberer, awake!

TO K. R.

KILLED IN ACTION, SEPTEMBER 25, 1915

NOW Autumn hath unfrocked the rooted trees
And life is all bare branches to be seen ;
The old year broodeth in a quiet disease
With moanful gust and fretting rain between ;
Thick-strewn with leaves lie all the ways below
And clog my feet with death where'er I go ;
And all is peaceless melancholy peace
And moody, dismal, dire unrest serene.

Thou comest not to fill the aching year,
As thou wast wont, with love and laughter still,
Till death's dark face was filled with pious cheer,
And all was very fair that seemed so ill,
And little but her leaves the year had shed,
And nothing but death's deathless self seemed dead
—Thou canst not come ! And when the skies
grow clear
Not even Spring shall those void spaces fill.

Thou was not fitted for the stress of war ;
Thy heart was tuned to kinder happier days.
And yet, alas ! the ruddy warrior-star
So closely on thy horoscope did graze,
And violence arose to claim thee, though
Thou never couldst her proper fury know
—And then the loving Gods that jealous are
Clipped off amain thy destined length of days.

Though time the ruthless had been slow to take,
By thy sweet ruth so happily subdued,
And envious Death forgot his rage to slake,
Being by thy goodness moved to gentle good,
Or, lest by one dire blow he should deprive
Even selfish life of all its wish to live,
And all his bitter joy unsavour'd make,
Had held from thee his twitching hardihood.

The brooding Gods had all forgotten quite
That thou on earth, or they in heaven were,
And needed not to take for their delight,
So much they loved to look upon thee here
In bright abode of bliss, which thou hadst made.
Nor maddened they at man's bold and unafraid
Worshipful love, and only used their might
To save thee from war's further anguish drear.

Thee, to whom it was bitterness indeed
To stretch thy hand for blood against a foe,
Or call him foe for whom thy heart could bleed
Still from the undelivered wounds of woe.
Yet thou didst shrink not from the sword, to fight
For hapless Freedom and beleaguered Right,
But bend thy pity like a fiery steed
And thus into the thickest battle go.

And, lacking strength of arm, wast stronger still
Of soul, and lacking heart hadst courage more
The heart for slaughter, not the heart to fill
For Truth's bright cause and Honour threatened
sore,
And lacking thought for Glory, unto us
The slaves of Glory, wast more glorious;
And lacking hope for gain, with stouter will
Did'st follow Peace for banner evermore.

What need for tears? For thou hast peace indeed;
The Gods have given thee thy heart's desire.
If thou still payest us a gentle heed,
Knowing the ashy end of this vast fire,
Pity no longer fills with tears thine eyes,
But a proud joy for men's great sacrifice
That still they make and wot not of the meed
Beyond all price of pain which they acquire.

Yet not thy peace thou sought'st. Thou wouldst
fain

Forgo thy peace to save a single tear,
And I, lest yet I give thy spirit pain,
Even from my o'er-mastering tears forbear,
Ah foolish hope, that so I could beguile !
A little while, brave heart, a little while
For my sad self my tears shall flow again,
Till through joy's tears once more I see thee clear.

The winds arise and all the leaves are blown
From their dark rings below the stark stripped
trees,

Till to each tree his own leaves are unknown
And he forgets the fall by slow degrees ;
But mid the heaving roots through bores blown
plain

The underflood spouts bubbling and again
Sucks back. So from my flooded heart alone
Grief wells and sinks and ever has increase.

EPIGRAM

MOTHER of many virtues, rueful war,
Of virtues that to Peace were better born ;
—O praise not War that these her children are ;
Blame rather Peace for barrenness forlorn.

SONNETS

I

CICERO

AH! Cicero, they clipped thy silver tongue
And filled thy head with far less precious
gold,

Who by the sweetness of thy voice were stung
Or thy long booming periods ocean-rolled.

Thou hadst indeed a mighty voice; but thou
Hadst also a weak woman-soul and vain

Mismated to the man-strength of thy brow—
And these for ever held thy life in twain.

Thou hadst a gentle heart for kinder things
Which thy uneasy soul would not allow,

But urged thee to the majesty of kings,

That brittle-bending, fruit-o'er-burdened bough!

Too proud thou wert for happiness to please,

Too vain for aught save splendour's sore disease.

II

VIRGIL

THY long hexameters come booming in
Filled by the stately memories of Rome :
—And as a lonely traveller far from home,
Who listens to the sea's snow-thundrous din,
And sees the fringy waves come rushing thin
Up the slope sand, within the glassy dome
Of dream half hears a foaming battle come,
Before his dearer homeland fancies win :—

So, happy Mantuan, I think of thee
Upon thy farm amid the Sabine hills,
Watching perchance the rich-turned fallow
loam,
Or pruning back the headstrong apple tree,
Or listening while at dusk the beehive fills
—Through that immortal thunder which is
Rome.

III

BATTLE

AS dives a black wind down upon the sea
Came all the dark Rutulian chivalry,
Athwart Æneas' brazen ranks, relying
Upon their chieftain's eagle heart and eye,
Who in their foremost rank, with red plume flying
And haughty sanguine face and voice defying,
Rode—Turnus!—in his golden panoply.
And soon like arrows on the air went sighing
The thick souls of the slaughtered, sobbing by
The sad reluctant spirits of the dying,
The anxious groaning souls that could not fly,
But strove for death—for all that dismal crying
Of passing souls against their foolish trying
To leave such happy anguish and to die.

IV

WINTER

THE big blot-breasted thrushes, winter-puffed,
 Brood in the snow all hungry, silent, huffed,
 And grudging of the songs they used to sing
 So slenderly all through the love-tide Spring.
Good lack ! Day closes in below the night.
Stir up the pilèd faggots, fragrant, bright,
 The while I call, like children round my knee,
 Sweet recollections of my infancy,
And listen to their stories, happier than
The child that listens to the grown-up man,
 Their fond sad father. Ever could I gaze
 Upon the glowing embers and still trace
Clear tracks that all across my memory go,
Soft as the print of birds' feet in the snow.

V

REVIVAL

HOW sweet it is idly to lie again
Within a fringe of shadow shepherdwise,
And gaze unseeing into the deep skies,
And feel below thick thoughts the placid brain
Like a still pool quick-ringed with rustling rain,
Till even that soft rain of thinking dies,
And dream, the blue kingfisher, flaming flies
Reflected, very delicate and plain.

Ah! calm cool water, what sweet nymph is this
Who creeps between the drooping willow trees,
And smiles upon her image that doth please,
And puts her fingers down for you to kiss,
And bending dives to meet your startled bliss
And break your levels with such ecstasies?

VI

THE WIDOW

WHEN Evening with her low-suspended pails
At length had from the milking slowly come
Across the silent water-meadows home
To her cool dairy down the glimmering rails,
And in broad shallow crocks had duly set
The milk for daybreak's skimming, and had blown
Her failing lantern out, and late had flown
To find her generous lover waiting yet—

I saw fresh stars yellow and blue and white,
Flame out like crocuses in fields that are,
And then below the cloudy eaves of night
The still moon from her lattice peer afar :
—Alas ! why tarrieth her lord so bright ?
—And at her breast a little lonely star.

VII

NIGHTFALL

HOW like a strewn rose day is faded quite,
And those red petals turned an ashen white,
And like a robin down the fallen leaves
One star comes out upon the littered night.
Sleeping upon his back old Ocean heaves
His mighty breast, and all the shore receives
His spreading locks awave, and slumber light
More slumber from his hoary breathing weaves.

Soon in bright ranks like nuns the stars receive
The hooded moon, their abbess, spirit-pale,
—In one wan group apart the holy Seven
Awaiting Sisters.—Nay, but she doth grieve
And secret wend beyond redemption's pale
Below the thick fruit-laden boughs of heaven.

VIII

FULL MOON

THE moon, night's pale dissembler, fills the sky
With semblance wan of underlighted day
—Of cloudless day, when ghostly eclipses lie
Upon the sun. But in their thinned array
Those unabashed and boldest stars refuse
To countenance the feckless fond pretence,
And stand for truth against the time's abuse,
Though death at last should be their recompense,
—Loyal chiders of the moon's extravagance,
Of night's own royalty the subjects true,
Proud scorers of the rosy day's advance,
Yet deigning not to share with him the blue
Enstraitened heavens, but smiling in the night
Far up beyond his farthest reach of light.

IX

SELF'S MIDDLEMAN

LIKE misremembered phantoms of a dream,
Or teasing forms which travelling clouds will
take

And, ere they full discover what they seem,
Confuse again and new half-semblance make,
I brood upon the pleasures of days fled
By sweet retail of pleasure to obtain
In shrewd and prosperous trafficking, instead
Of their old wholesale value, a clear gain.
Alas! for such a business I lack skill,
Or those bright goods have altered by their keeping ;
I cannot find an unsoiled pleasure still
For all my diligent search and bitter weeping ;
But on the tiering shelves lies many a woe :
—Clearly as ever and freshly still they glow !

X

SONNET TO . . . —I

BRAVE heart, though well we know thou wouldst
not be

Remembered, if remembering brings us pain,
Still though our hearts oft broken break again
Thereat, again we must remember thee.
Yet is thy Spirit and our conscience free,
Since all the anguish which our tears contain
Is sweeter unto us and shall remain
Sweeter than happy life's forgetful glee.

Brave heart, bright Spring renews the first void
year

Since thou hast gone upon death's wintry way,
And all the April skies are cloudy-clear,
And trees have shaken out their green array ;
But at my eyes intrudes a sudden tear
—Alone this year I enter into May !

XI

SONNET TO . . . —II

AND more !—Thou hast become our monument
To single duty and to courage high,
Our sword when cloudy sloth is gathering by,
Our shield when fear comes—our strong battlement,
Our rally when our utmost force is spent,
Our strong decision when strong doubt is nigh,
Our wings of daring through the windy sky,
Our shelter from the vengeful element.

O mighty living, O dead mightier friend,
When heavy storming skies break in above,
Or languid noons with soft temptation bend,
Our ready proof that ne'er we need to prove !
—Wherefore, for our own sakes and honour's end,
We must remember still, but most for love.

XII

PROTEUS

I FOUND old Proteus lying far and dry
Above the weedy pastures of the sea,
And fell upon him with a purpose sly,
And hugged his slippery sides in mighty glee.
Then into fluent hope first turnèd he :
I held him. Sharp despair he then did try
In vain—as hot desire had mastered me
Had he not foolish changed to greed thereby !

Fainting I thought of his wise fables old
And all that I at last seemed nigh to win.
He turned to mocking laughter hard to hold ;
But still I held him by a margin thin.
I cried in triumph then—alas ! too bold :
—He turned to love, fled seaward and dived in.

XIII

RETROSPECT

AS one who climbs a mountain and soon stands
Upon the lofty ledges which he braves,
High shores to which the rolling winds are waves,
Then backward looks upon the sunny lands,
The woods, the valleys, and the silver bands
Of river and rich fields that he enslaves,
And with a new-discovered beauty saves
From valley-weariness his heart's demands—

So all alone my sorry heart looks back
On childhood which she once found all as sad,
Consoling foolish age's better lack
With fancied joys that childhood never had,
Forgetting that upon the steep up-track
Are true demanding joys to make her glad.

XIV

THOUGHT

LIKE dancing gnats that twitch the waters
 bright,
Like drake-stones lightly skipping out of sight,
 Like rapid swallows' soft-impinging speed,
Like placid stately swans slow-floating white,
 Like moor-fowl diving deeply from the reed,
 Like leaping trout with all his mailly breed,
Upon the levels of the mind with might
 Comes thought—from fancy to deep stir indeed !
And like a leaf some thoughts are borne away,
And like an oary bird some thoughts will stay
 Against the current, and like fishes some
Live darkly in the water day by day
 —Till chance, the happy fisherman, shall come
And draw them gleaming from their hidden home !

XV

FROM . . . TO . . . —I

FAR up the slopes of sleep I walked with thee
Beyond the narrow ridges that divide
Destruction from destruction, on each side
Chasmed obscure, o'erhung precipitously
—Faint paths which still direct my soul set free
To that wan-shadowed realm where those abide
Who hasted not for glory when they died,
But waited if perchance they still might see
Their living friends in those dark borders walk,
Strayed from the bounds of slumber, and advise
Upon life's little vain calamities,
And in their sweet familiar voices talk
Of death, that seemed so surely a strong balm,
As it were like the greeting of loved eyes.

XVI

FROM . . . TO . . . —II

AND far aloft upon those silent spaces
I looked : and I was suddenly alone !
I cried upon thy secret spirit flown,
And heard thy voice receding fast, like traces
Of blossoms overblown in windy places,
Remote sad-yearning answers further thrown.
Then knew I how this woe was of mine own
Making, even sin that sunders and debases.

How long I wept I cannot tell at all,
Till thou returnedst from thy banishment
With such a sweet gracious admonishment
And happiness too sweet—beyond recall.
I cannot mind what thou didst say to me :
Only I know that I have been with thee !

XVII

STRAYS

O DEATH, soft whisperer, well might you be
A secret joy forbidden—sweetly told !
Quiet as an intuition and as bold
You come in wooing wise to welcome me
And win my love so very tenderly
—Whom oft I heard go hissing like a cold
Serpent, and in my grip I longed to hold
And strangle out its lengths tumultuously.

A serpent conquered Eve : a serpent still,
With voice subdued to whispering sweetness, you
Attempt my heart's weak vanity out of view
Of my strong Adam, my imprudent will.
—Nay, for she hears that hissing dry and chill,
All your sweet subtle yearnful whispering through.

XVIII

MY MOTHER

HOW many little things, that while she lived
Had hardly moved my mind at all, remain
In clearest memory upon my brain ;
And how much joy and sorrow have I derived
From reading like a book her life again,
At whose first reading I had missed so much
—Or seemed to have missed till at death's final
touch
The book was closed, and the missed things were
plain !

The joy she had in flowers, birds and books
Brings my own joy therein like sorrow back ;
This threadbare hassock, like a well-worn track,
Leads back beyond my memory and sweet looks
The first remembered ; and my heart hardly brooks
Her spectacles and letters in the rack.

XIX

To Rupert Brooke

I. APOLLO THE GOD

APOLLO'S liege foresworn to ruddy Mars!
And he who lately held thy fealty
And oath to keep thy heart and fingers free
From all save beauty and the stops of song,
And gave thee, his fair vassal, all the stars
And broad blue leagues of heaven for thy fief,
And towery fame for builded castle strong,
Heard thee forsworn with greater pride than grief.

And when before thy new untuneful lord
He saw thee singing, filled thy throat again
With worthy song, till listening Mars grew vain
And to himself thy music did accord
—Ah! then Apollo drew his jealous sword
And touched thy neck and took thy heart again.

XX

To Rupert Brooke

II. APOLLO THE SEER

SERVICE of heart and sinew unto death
So bravely offered he would still allow
And guard thee in the battle from the blow,
Thy shield above, thy steadiness beneath.

Nor should thy flesh the gaping wound-lips show,
Nor thy keen spirit from its chafing sheath
Hiss like a swift-drawn sword-blade, nor thy breath,
Before thy song was finished, silent go.

He still could save thee.—Ah! but he to save,
Himself within death's very gate must smite
And slay thee with a sudden shaft of light
Which leaves no terror of the wound it gave;
But coming with the bosom of a wave
Bore thee beyond the pebbled sands of night.

XXI

SUNSET

DAY, like a stricken soldier, crawls away
Through blood and fire for cover in the west,
And gentle evening finds him where he lay
Outworn and fainting for a little rest
That had been longer than he sadly guessed ;
But soon she binds his wounds as best she may,
And brings him leaning on her anxious breast
To her cool ward far from the bickering fray.

Here he may rest and live. Sweet nurse serene,
With cool deft slender hands, and feet like Hope's,
And presence like a prayer or like a prayer's
Answer unsought, and smile so calm and keen
With sympathy that when pain blindly gropes
At life he catches and not at close despairs.

BOUSTROPHEDON

THE years like heavy oxen to and fro
In slow monotony of ploughing go
Across the pastures of my soul, where late
Young Joy, the shepherd, led his delicate
Choice flocks,—till older Care, grown jealous, set
Time with his team to turn those meadows yet
To more account. How soon the sharing plough
Breaks up the turf and turns it through and through!
How long ere those sad fields upturned in vain
Shall show the level pasturage again!

APRIL

COME, delicate with tears
And soft with smiles,
Sweet last of the fond year's
Strong progeny, first daughter fair
With gentle woman-wiles!
—Born close to March, thy brother of the gale
—The ruddy boy!—and his playfellow white,
Fair for a girl, yet, as a boy is brave,
More open of thy joy, revealing now
Love tender that he is too proud to show,
Bright-eyed and he so grave.

Come, April, with thy broken skies
Come on!
We would be frolic who must be so wise
Anon.
We, too, would shed for joy a while our tears
That flow for grief so long.

Come with thy buds and blossoms and delight ;
Come with all love's arrears
And might
Of song !

Like last year's leaves
Lie thoughts upon the brain
—Break through, bright April, fresh and green
again !
March stirred them little with his mighty heaves
Of wind ; but thou
With little—with no pain—
'Neath overgrowth of joy canst hide them now,
Till sweet their netted wraiths alone remain.

Long hath my heart contained thee, and my mind
Thy constant prophet been :
No sweeter hope had my strong soul to bind
Him earthward still.
Come, April, on, fulfilled of life so green,
With tracks of violet and daffodil !

VIOLETS

I CAME through meadows where the cowslips
grow
Below the tall moon-daisies broad and bright
—Rich yellow cowslips, whose deep bosoms show
Those crimson moles of beauty delicate.
The flowers as softly won upon my sight
As fragrance: sweet the blooms were to be
seen,
Shapely to smell. So sight and smell relate
Their mutual pleasure with no bar between.
And in the hedgerow violets white or blue
Bloomed o'er the littered damp red-spotted sticks,
And far across the field their fragrance threw ;
—Then fast I closed my eyes at breath so rare,
For sight and smell in one full sense to mix
And draw such floating beauty from the air.

THE RING-DOVE

DEEP in the thunder-tops of the dark pines
Where, Joveline, March kept rumbling in
restraint

His angry mischief, where with whispers faint
And many a dazzling drop now April shines,
The ring-dove proudly ripples his bright neck
Beside his mate, who little seems to reck
His wooing soft advances or fine show,
But preens demure her feathers then and now
Down her fair sides that softest shadows fleck ;—

Or flies beyond him to the farther tree,
Whither in all his pride he labours fain,
Then with soft indignation coos again
And warm persuasions of his high degree,
And love's fond praise proved in his choice desire,
—Till he shall all her sweet reluctance tire,
And she fresh won from happiest pretence
Returns with him towards the pinetops dense,
As humbly sweet as he could well require.

There soon on loudest wings and busiest
They fly, and in their rosy beaks convey
The little knotted broken sticks, and lay
Together their strong flat loose-built nest
With genius' careless chance disposal fine,
Surer than skill, than purpose more divine.
And neater in its fond untidiness
Their neatness' self.—And there thou soon shalt
press,
Sweet dove, upon those two white eggs of thine !

THE RED-BLACK ROSE

DEEP red-black rose,
Dark angry rose divine,
Proud passionate rose !
Who, spending all his days,
Could still achieve that praise
And blame of thine ?

Deep red-black rose,
Displeasured rose amain,
Stern tyrannous rose !
Who, wasting all his years,
Thy proud self-constraint bears,
And thy dark pain ?

Deep red-black rose,
Indignant rose divine,
Immoderate rose !
Who, dreaming all his life,
Could match that heart of strife
—Dark love of thine ?

CORYDON

L. O., KILLED IN ACTION SEPTEMBER 25, 1915

“ COME bring ye river weeds cold, lank and long,
And with their clinging moisture bind my
brows ;

Bring ye for wine sea-water salt and strong,
That I alone with sorrow may carouse
And, like a Bacchant in his wild delight,
Make loud the hollow night
With empty lamentation and fond strife,
A single reveller, a sorry wight
All drunken with the bitterness of grief !

“ Alas ! what company has bitter woe ?
What willing followers such dread merriment ?
On whom can grief her burden's part bestow
And find less anguish from the part she lent ?
Or who can hope to share his heart's distress
Except with loneliness ?

So I must bear grief's burden all alone,
Dire mistress she indeed to thwart or press,
And lonely call upon thee, Corydon !

“ O Shepherd, wherefore—wherefore art thou fled ?
Could we not give thy heart delight enough ?
Wouldst walk a ghost amid the shades instead
Of living wight with us, thy fellows rough ?
Wast weary grown of gracing our poor love,
Being so far above,
We so unworshipful and unafraid ?
We strove our silly uttermost to prove
Our hearts of love which they so ill conveyed !

—
“ Nay now, forgive my false and foolish tongue
Her broken river-babblings, thoughtless woe !
Forgive a tender heart so sadly stung
If for a lonely moment's ease she throw
A little blame upon thy blameless head !
—What chiding brook the dead ?
O would that thou couldst even frown upon
The hapless bitter words that I have said,
And scorn our pastures, living, Corydon ! ”

So sang the mournful shepherd, chiding, calling
“ O Corydon ! ” when twilight stroke the hills,

And stealthy shadows from the hills were crawling,
And cool night-breezes shook the daffodils
And through the bristly pine tree tops went sighing,
As unto him replying.

Then back he brushed his curls and took his stock
And strode the pasture that deft night was plying
With weft of mist, to call his scattered flock.

Yet not alone, sad shepherd, thou didst weep
For Corydon,—ah, hapless Corydon !
Since all the shepherds of the dale did keep
Their flocks apart and solitary moan ;
And all made lamentation none could share
Upon the noontide air ;
And all held sorrow for their mistress true,
None other's pleasure and none other's care ;
And each lamented more than all could do.

Ah ! woeful shepherds well ye did lament
Fair Corydon, and still have tears to shed.
Life ne'er had such a loss along the dale,
Nor so much love was in a moment fled,
Nor so much loving left alone to brood
Upon its solitude,
Nor hope so much and such achievement rare

Did death before break up for fuel wood—
Ah, shepherds, ye will have no tears to spare !

Well knew he how to send his happy breath
On tuneful message through his oaten reed,
Now to the shadowy court of jealous Death,
And now to Love's warm bowers and bright mead,
And often to those merry spaces by
Of jocund Revelry,
And sometimes on an errand soft and low
With notes that crept, like tears upon the eye,
To the sweet provinces of peerless Woe.

To tend his trusting flocks full well he knew,
To wean from death the woolly-gaitered lamb
That ails forgetful of the milk it drew
So sweetly from its bleating anxious dam ;
—Till it would stretch its little tongue and lick
His fresh-dipped finger thick
With cream,—now fondly kneeling on its knees
From habit old, with drooping tail all quick
From pleasure,—whom death only had seemed to
please.

“ Oh ! who dares drive his sad unfollowing sheep
And trust his tearful eyes to tale them truly,

The little lambs that will no longer leap,
But wander from their bleating dams unruly ;
The heavy ewes that roam and will not feed,
As in some greater need,
And with their sad inquiry fill the valley,
Or restless rove in flocks across the mead,
Or round the empty wattles seek and dally ?

“ Let some new shepherd come who knew him not,
Who will not mind the disregardful plaints
Or know the meaning which their looks have got.
Nay, none but I, albeit my heart faints,
Shall take thy charge, to soothe much as I may
Their bitter loss away,
And bear to drive a while them all along,
Till they with care shall follow in my way.”
So broke the mournful shepherd on my song.

Full store had he of fables old and mellow
To wile away a weary winter's night
Before the fragrant faggots flaming yellow
And sending gusts of stars upon the night,
And such a voice as carries level pleasure
Within its happy measure,
And to the oft-told story gives new grace,

And unto married hands a gentle pressure,
And such sweet sadness to an old man's face.

Ah, Corydon ! And all the dale he filled
In summer with the echoes of his song,
Like the steep-ledgèd waterfall that spilled
Its ropy lengths to music all along.
And unto thee, fair Thestylis, he shook
His music like a brook
Of broken melodies all passing sweet
—Ah, Thestylis, for tears thou canst not look,
Nor he for love his melodies repeat !

“ Ne'er was so true a lover in the dell,
So sweet a singer and historian,
So shrewd and kind a shepherd, and so well
Empowered a piper. O ye clouds that ran
Swift races for him over April skies,
Pause ye and sympathise ;
Ye pastures that so well have known him send
The dewy tears from all your flowery eyes ;
And ye, sad mountains, your proud foreheads bend !

“ For Corydon is dead. Ah, woe the telling !
Who gave a thought that he should ever die ?

Still shall I wander to his empty dwelling,
Dreaming, then at the sudden thought rush by ;
And still shall I start up from my vexation
For his interpretation,
Then weep my trouble new like dust away ;
Still shall I come for his deep consolation,
And still in vain for consolation stay.

“ Ah, Corydon ! as I was strong to love,
So am I strong to lose so dear a friend.
No foolish fancied joy of hope shall move
My heart from forlorn sorrow's certain trend ;
Nor would I loose a single tear to gain
What never can be plain
As death is, never spare a tear to guess
How I might see thy lovely head again,
Save as I saw it in death's loveliness.”

So sang the mournful shepherd as he came
Beyond the pasture, weighed as though with years ;
The stars seemed each a little curly flame
As he looked out upon them through his tears.
And night from all her generations shed
Sad thoughts upon his head,
And then by many a stair would lead him on

To hopes fallacious of the deathless dead.
But still he followed not. “ Ah, Corydon ! ”

Now rose the gray and heavy-weeded morning,
Forgetting all the colours he can show ;
And late the flowers hung closed and disadorning
The woods and meadows. Mists hung dewlap low,
As earth and sky in one gray woe were meeting,
And held the night's retreating,
And veiled the sorrows of the silent rocks.
Unslept and heedless of their timely bleating
The shepherd still forgot his coted flocks.

ARIEL

PIPE me to merry pastures, Spirit fair !
Thou lovely shepherd, pipe to dance and
song !

I would be dancer to your piping rare
Who still have wept to mournful pipe so long :
For I have left the dreary dales below
To all their woe,
And would with joyful heart and nimble feet
Climb to thy mountain pastures fringed with snow,
Where in good fellowship for pleasure sweet
Now Spring and Winter meet,
While bright clouds race and urging breezes blow.

Pipe thou my soul from her obscure recess
At my heart's ingle, where she shruggeth still
Over those ashes quite burned out—unless
She still can dream of fire, being so chill—
And bloweth fitfully on them for the flame
That never came :

Or if she haply still a spark may find,
—Pipe, though so haggard-old she seem and lame ;
Pipe age and care and coldness out of mind ;
Pipe in new fires behind,
—No smouldering fires to her returning shame !

Pipe her to youth, till she shall braid her hair
And put on dazzling robes of new delight,
And mid the lovely damsels dance more fair,
And mid the dancing breezes speed more light,
And mid the fragrant flowers more fragrant move,
Sweeter than love,
—Till she no more her ingle-nook shall seek,
Or of cold loneliness again approve,
Crouching upon herself grown old and weak ;
But shall fold winter bleak
With warmth below and tenderness above.

Scatter the ashes from the vacant hearth ;
Blow the great flakes like merry leaves along ;
And cleanse and garnish all the chambers swarth :
Pipe *home to hearth* and to a marriage song !
For she with Joy, her bridegroom, now returns
Where new fire burns,—
New fire with heaped up fuel and mighty store,

New fire that dies not though she ne'er concerns
Herself to plenish it, that evermore
Burns brightly as before,
Consuming not, nor to sad ashes turns.

Pipe, lovely shepherd, never cease thy lays,
The while I tend thy flocks with joyous cheer !
Pipe out the equal lengths of unlost days ;
Pipe out the volume of the rolling year ;
With joy pipe in each happy change anew,
Each season true
With sweetness old returning ! Pipe me fain
Awake when first gay dawn comes peering through ;
Pipe me to slumber soft when heaven's plain
Grows starry-deep again ;
And all sweet dreams advance with music true !

THE SEASONS

(DEADMAN'S SONG FROM "LIFE")

HOW long have I been lacking
Those gray fields fresh and free,
Those cloudy hills and valleys,
And the gray brimming sea ?
—How long I lack those Winters
That never quite can lay
The sweet ghosts of dead Summers
And Autumns dropped away :
—Those unregretful Winters
Of sweet serene old age,
That pausing in his reading
Turns back the mellow page.

How long have I been lacking
—Those dreaming spreads of sky,
Those woodlands low and rosy,
Those woodlands green and high ?

—How long I lack those Autumns
That never quite forget
Amid their happy fruitage
That Summer did beget :
—Those grateful golden Autumns
Of gentle age mature,
That in her children's faces
Sees her dead lord endure.

How long have I been lacking
Those lofty noons aglow,
Those tall undazzled mountains,
Those dazzled seas below ?
—How long I lack those Summers
That never quite repent
In all their sober wisdom
Of Spring's wild ravishment :
Those burning sanguine Summers
Of manhood first put on,
That strains for ever forward,
Forgetting what has gone.

How long have I been lacking
Those buds and blossoms bright,
The day all tears and music,
The tender starry night ?

—How long I lack those Aprils
That never quite surprise
The wonder of dead Winter
From their immortal eyes :
—Those tearful, blissful Aprils
Of childhood, age's friend,
The fond impatient reader
Who turns to con the end.

DELIGHT IN CHILDREN

BY merry feet my grapes are trodden down,
The flickering unshod feet of young delight ;
My days aside upon an heap are thrown
Like empty shrunk skins, and all their juice
Is drawn to make bright merriment more bright
Or stored to be a bitter time's excuse.

Unstubborn, trampled days—that feet so light
Should make such darling havoc and should wring
So much of ecstasy from things so slight !
Yet were my days as mountains, they were less
Mighty than grapes which children as they sing
So lightly dance on in love's merry press.

EPISTLE TO —

FAREWELL !—TO DAMON GREETINGS AND FAREWELL !

WHEN Autumn nights grow cold and fires begin,
And resting Time has put his slippers on,
And warms his feet before the blazing hearth
Lying at happy length, grown sociable ;
And dreaming smiles into the glowing fire,
—I draw the other chair and opposite
Bask too, and in an equal share of dream
Engrossed, communication sweet enjoy
Of silence, the soul-speech of constant friends ;
—Or, when they bring the candles, take my book
Well thumbed, with turned-down pages, opening
Without my conscious will, like a friend's heart,
Directly at the best belovèd place—
That chosen poem often read before,
Yet full of new discoveries. Or I take
My tablets and write down my ease of heart,
Then, reading through the record, wonder who

Bent o'er my shoulder and usurped my hand
And wrote those fancies, which I cannot claim,
But startled read as something sweet and strange,
And almost disavow the handwriting
As mine ! But who could counterfeit so well ?
Or haply missing a friend's feet that met
So often mine upon the blazing hearth,
A letter write, like my unanswered half
Of conversation, and almost as sweet ;
And in the pleasant hope of pleasing him
And fond imagination of him there
With patient smile and ready waiting tongue,
Forget the lack of his remarks between,
—Rather like one who hardly can allow
His friend speech-room of heart, so copiously
He must disburden his. And even so
And with such cheer I now to you indite
This letter, by the steady candles' flame,
You opposite, Time having left his chair,
And you usurped it. But I dare not look,
Since only by the waving of my pen,
His magic characters, his wizard words,
And swift unpausing sentences, can I
Contain you in the corner of my eye,
Hardly observed, but smiling there as though
You had my thought already and I yours.

“ Farewell ! ” that strikes so often a sad end,
Strikes here a sweet beginning, as it should,
The goodwill featly rolling distance up—
That well-writ scroll of ours—and sealing it
With closeness more than hand or tongue or eye
Could offer, the unbroken closeness of the heart.
And so that scroll shall lie for ever sealed
Among Love’s documents, like some one’s bond,
With its *Whereas* and *Items* and *Aforesaid*s,
In legal rote sonorous and unread.
For in that contiguity of heart,
An involution sweet of thoughts ensphered
With well-wishing concentric, like those orbs
Of ivory so delicately intercarved
Throughout the whole inlay of lesser globes,
The skill of some quaint slant-eyed Chinaman
—That mutual interwreathing sweet of soul,
We make the bond superfluous evermore.

“ Farewell ! ”—Love’s first fond wish and Love’s
sad last—

But though well-wishing is a closer thing
Than flesh is, yet as signet on that seal,
And clear peculiar mark and monogram,
Royal cipher, I would have thyself impressed
In bodily presence, for my Self to feel

The firm raised lettering with embodied touch,
As something to be lost and sadly sweet,
But only to be lost until the losing
Is also lost in everlasting gain.

Now, Friend, I pause to mend the fallen fire
That needeth mending, pile the pine logs on
And watch the hissing resin flow and flame,
And smell therein the sweetness of my thoughts.
How secretly Time crept back to his chair !

Fire glows anew, and all my thought moves on,
And now I will discourse of other things,
If not so near the heart yet nearly touching
Our lives, and very delicate indeed.

To you, my Friend, who like a gardener fed
My first unfolding leaves of poesy,
Disclosing promises of bloom between,
And, most sagacious, gently pruned away
Rash overgrowths too prodigal of sap,
And wisely bound against the sunniest wall
The chosen branches: to you who digged once
 more
About the roots and brought the barren boughs
To blossom, and the blossom to sweet fruit,

To your choice tasting sweet, your taste approved
By less intrepid tasters who still fear
To acclaim new fruit among more splendid old,
And shyly hold their judgment,—the more praise
To you, to me more gratitude!—the tree
Puts forth her best for you alone, until
Others shall dare at your temptation take
The *good and evil* as they deem, and find
That they have fed upon a *tree of life*.
And not so much in fond maternal mood
Of authorship as filially relying
On your paternal judgment shrewd and true,
Prouder parental love too proud to praise
Save what praiseworthy is, I surely make
So bold a claim, inarrogant, as you,
And I care not who else, will grant.—Although
I feel it flow as virtue in my heart
That something of these rimes that I have made
Shall still be music on the Last of Days.

Yet is my soul at question with my heart,
And my mind stands perplexed as arbiter
Whether by using this one talent, lodged
With me for use I doubt not (wherefore else
Save as temptation, and this I cannot hold)
As profitably as I may, I serve

My proper end and best accounted purpose ;
Or rather do not hide beneath it still
Talents more profitably used, and judge
It, being most delightful, also best.
And the strict suit is all the more perplexed
Because my soul, the prosecutor, still
Half hopes for the defendant, and the judge
Is also in heart's favour prejudiced ;
And only Conscience, my soul's counsel cold,
By his close reasoning and argument
Irrefutably holds the balance still
A little less than level on his side.
And all save he are tempted to invite
And final make your sought decision, since
Too well they know how you would straight decide
With heavy acceptable damages
Against the suit, and with such strict account
That Conscience would fall baffled back, and hold
The plaintiff as non-suited after all.

This way persuasion lies. But I who late
Half-hearted, for no better purpose, would
Abandon Poesy, so little I
Achieved, and only at your strong rebuke withheld
—Full-hearted now and flushed with something done
Am stronger to abandon, have attained

Courage to conquer proud success, although
He stronger seems than failure ever was,
If this to better purpose may be done.
Wherefore, I now adjure you, take the scales,
As much as mine the world's friend, and forgetting
Your pleasure and therein my dear delight,
—Forgetting, only that more pleasure still
May yet be won and more delight attained
For us by sacrifice which then shall seem
So little, nay, become so great a joy—
And give your judgment like a God, who looks
Upon the individual through mankind,
And loves him more as he becomes himself
The more he is inseparably lost
Among his fellows, impersonally achieves
The truest personality of all.

Yet can a man judge only for himself ;
But having so essentially a friend's heart,
Can judge with it alone. And so, my friend,
My heart, my self, judge with me for the best.

And now the fire is all burnt out and gray,
The candles to their sockets sunk, and Time
Makes stir for bed, and I must bid " Good-night ! "

TITHONUS

BURDENED with immortality and bending,
Whom years could break not with their mortal
weight,

A crooked Tithon sorrowfully wending,
A hoopéd mockery of godlike height,

My soul went heavy, as a swan slow-winged
Her death-way down the failing flanks of sky
With tardy mortal song,—my soul went singing
Song woeful with its immortality.

THE BREEZE AND THE FEATHER

THE sobbing breeze has rocked himself to sleep
And in his slumber still must weep
That waking did such lamentation keep.

Over the glade the woods of pine
Heavily their dark arms entwine,
Bowed with a heavy care divine,
Heavily lay their heads together,
Heavily and without a sound
—Save the voice of the little feather
Softly floating down and around.

Lightly the little feather falls,
Lightly eddies and lightly calls,
Lightly with visible madrigals,
For her dear playfellow sad so long
With life too heavy, and love too strong,
And sleep too feeble to save the wrong ;
And the angel pines too thronged together,
Thronged together without a sound.
Soft is the silver fall of the feather
Slowly floating down and around.

" Or ever I come to the sad earth's breast,
 Gentle breeze, leap up from thy rest,
 Swift as thy wont was loveliest !
 Speed me and chase me, filling all
 My heart with thy joy ethereal ;
 —Rend me, but do not let me fall
 Here, where the pines so brood together,
 Brood together without a sound ! "

Sweet was the voice of the fearful feather
 Slowly floating down and around.

Wider and wider still her rings she spun,
 Glad in the sudden struggling sun,
 Eddying lest all too soon her fall were done.
 Lightly she heard the sad breeze stir ;
 Lightly she dived to meet him there ;
 Heavily earth came up to her.
 Heavily wept the pines together,
 To and fro with a sighing sound :
 Silent fluttered the fallen feather
 Wet and heavy upon the ground.

Silver feather—O hapless feather !
 Bright arms brush back the clouded skies,
 And the brooding pines all shine together
 Watching the wakened breeze arise.

THE BREEZE AND THE FEATHER 209

Glad he rises and lightly blows
To stir the feather's heavy repose
To the light soft-floating life he knows.

Heavily in his arms she lies ;
Heavily with her corpse he flies,
Chiding ever as he does go
Upon his pitiless playfellow.

VIGNETTE BETWEEN TWO FINGERS

PINCHED waters creeping pass
Through the long grass,
Bright mouse-quick rills
That run
Down to the dun
And rapid staglike river tined with reeds,
Which runs between the hills
And through the flaggy meads.

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APOCALYPSE

FRESH fragrant rose, ah! broken bud unwise,
I hear the sighs of Autumn's Ladies fair
Jealous of thee, as in their cruel despair
They strip thy leaves—even now upon my eyes,
Before the summer dies!

Fresh rose, fresh rose,
Again thy petals close,
Sad bosom of my bliss,
Sweet bosom of my woes,
—Sweet fresh red rose!

Fresh fragrant rose, before the summer dies,
I hear the tramp of Autumn's Gentlemen
In their gay tabards, treading down again
Thy fatal beauty—that all scattered lies
Already on my eyes!

Fresh rose, fresh rose,
Again thy petals close,
Sad bosom of my bliss,
Sweet bosom of my woes,
—Sweet fresh red rose!

THE TOURNEY'S END

THAT arrogant cold knight, with naked shield
Unblazoned, bannerless and closely mailed,
Has triumphed in the bitter graceless field,
And in the mire moiled Autumn's colours trailed.
—Thou silent secret knight without a name,
What sorry trumpets thee unvanquished proclaim !
 Sad queen of beauty, rise
 Since this must be.
Yield him the grudging prize
 Of victory
With unsundering eyes.

What ! kneels he not to take the proffered crown ?
Will no one dare to smite behind his knees,
Or strike him, or himself be stricken down ;
Victorious in that he no longer sees
The dread insufferance and the dreader shame ?
Dares no man strike his vizor up and learn his name ?

Sad queen of beauty, rise
Since this must be.
Yield him the grudging prize
Of victory
With unsundering eyes.

Come then in armèd bands and close him round ;
Less shame it were to save the Lady so.
Alas ! what armèd bands could e'er withstand
That heart or stand against his mighty blow !
Smile, ladies, lest he wreak you further shame ;
Victorious, ye craven trumpets, him proclaim.
Sad queen of beauty, rise
Since this must be.
Yield him the grudging prize
Of victory
—And with surrendering eyes.

EPITAPH

SLOWLY down in a long descent
Under the glittering firmament,
To and fro in a gentle fall,
Lengthening out lorn life afar,
Wound my heart from his glory tall,
'Twixt dim Earth and his lost bright Star
—Sank to the Earth and found her breast
Sweeter than his fair star's unrest.

FORTUNE'S WHEEL

THE Wheel is turning, very softly turning :
Invisibly at utmost speed it goes ;
And these are careless maybe, and those yearning,
And these are lost in what men call repose.

The Wheel is turning : may it bring
Thee fortune fair and fit !
The Wheel is a mighty, splendid thing
—And underneath is the Pit !

The Wheel is turning, very softly turning,
Like music into sudden silence hushed ;
And those above are pitiless and burning,
And those below are pitiful and crushed.

The Wheel is turning, very softly turning
As exquisitely as most subtle pain ;
And some are crushed away by that slow churning,
And some are crushed, but clinging rise again.

The Wheel is turning, very softly turning
Relentless as the silent firmament ;
And those who reach the crest of all their yearning
Already move upon the dire descent.

The Wheel is churning, very slowly churning ;
And how soft the circle comes again,
Fortune accepts the stubborn souls returning
With all the pity and the strength of pain.

The Wheel is turning : may it bring
Thee fortune fair and fit !
The Wheel is a mighty, splendid thing
—And underneath is the Pit !

OLDMAN'S SONG

(FROM "LIFE")

AND we have borne the brunt of the weathers
Over, my heart, and over again,
The rage of the sun and the snow's slow feathers,
The drought of frost and the pelt of rain.

And none shall say, as he stoops and shivers
And pokes the log to a brighter blaze,
That we were one of the ingle-livers
Who clip their lives to lengthen their days.

THE ANCIENT HARPER OF ABINGDON

THE Autumn leaves were aflicker, faltering
through the mist,
Falling, steadily falling, like sick flames faltered
they—
I' the saddest of all sad sheddings, for the sulky
winds were whist
And came not grasping to whirl them and drift
them dancing away.

So they hung to the point of dropping, like a drown-
ing man to a spar.
Not even the boughs took pity, nor shook of their
own accord.
And the mist hung heavy upon them, and wetted the
grass afar ;
And they fell in a sadder silence than the sigh of the
saddest word.

THE ANCIENT HARPER OF ABINGDON 219

Thickly the mist hung wreathèd, a gather of unblown
breath ;
As the world might cease in winter and all breath
stagnant be,
And if it lessened the falling and hid the chasm
beneath,
It maddened with motionless patience and stolid
insistency.

And weary was I, and weary of Autumn, the fruit
and the falling ;
And I gathered my harp and I covered his cords
from the misty dew.
Then I harkened again to the silence, and I heard the
silence calling ;
And I looked at the mist again, and the Shape came
darkening through.

I snatched my harp from his cover, the Lay from his
gleaming strings ;
And I sate on the ivy-tussock under the flaking gold ;
And I took my harp to my knee, and I sang as a
mother sings—
Till the leaves flew back from their falling, and the
silver mist was rolled.

And first I sang for the music ; but the music
stronger grew
And softly gathered my song as the sun might gather
a cloud.
And the breath of a thousand Aprils over my spirit
blew ;
And green were the leaves of the forest, and the
songs of the forest were loud.

Bowed and bearded and hoary, a man of winter and
warp
Had I sat on the ivy-tussock, haggard, weary, and
old ;
Till the music had lifted me up, and I sang like a
child to my harp,
And green were the leaves of the forest, and the
flowers of the forest were gold.

Then I felt my beard fall from me, my tunic leap to
my knees ;
And I felt thick curls on my forehead, and my face
as smooth as a flower ;
And I looked at my hands and laughed, and lifted
my harp with ease ;
And I looked at my knee so slender, and rose with
timorous power.

THE ANCIENT HARPER OF ABINGDON 221

And I danced to an antique music, and sang a forgotten song,
Under the leaves of the forest, over the flowers and grass.
Then I sate on the ivy-tussock, and I drew my harp along ;
And sudden, under my fingers, I felt a new strength pass.

But sad was the sound of the music—as a desolate sea that swept
Over a desolate shore, and my heart was the streaming sand.
And I bent with my falling tresses, and over my harp I wept ;
And the music mourned and murmured after I held my hand.

For I thought of my wife unhappy over the ingle fire,
Lorn for her aged harper, and shedding her tears in vain.
And a little thing seemed the glory, fond of my heart's desire,
And much and good seemed the guerdon of silver age again.

And I felt a beard at my chin, and the sickle-bend
 in my back ;
 I looked at my quivering hand there—'twas crooky,
 rugged, and old ;
 And I found that my harp was heavy, and stiff were
 my knees, alack !
 And dead were the flowers of the forest, and the
 leaves of the forest were gold.

And the mist grew heavy upon them, and wetted the
 grass below,
 And leaves were loosing and falling, falling like
 sickly fire ;
 But I wist not of their falling as I crept to the ingle
 glow,
 And much and good was my guerdon, and little my
 heart's desire.

ENVOY

My harp has a silken cover, and hay in his gleaming
 cords ;
 I sit on the ivy-tussock, sit in the sun alone.
 The song has a lovely cadence and tender beautiful
 words ;
 But my tongue is under a ban, and my heart is under
 a stone.

WEEPING-WILLOWS

THE weeping-willows linèd here,
Green-plunging with cascade of leaves,
Sweep over like a booming weir
Which to a deaf man doth appear,
An apparition that deceives
His sense, and more appears outright
Like sound upon his dazzled sight,
—A sounding sight, a visible sound,
A stable motion, stillness racing,
Sheer-falling through the frothless ground
Where-under the weird stream is wound
Beyond all hope of human tracing.

THE MAD HARPER OF HOLYCLEUGH

(HE SINGS TO HIS HARP)

THE heavens were weighed upon the world with
mist,
And all so narrow is and all so gray,
And oh ! I strike thy shivering cords to whist
The sad slow things that eat my heart away.

And there is music in the air,
A sighing and a sobbing and a keening ;
—Music that makes lost lovely things more fair
And stirs the slow things with its intervening,
Whilst I for joy despair.

Cold slow things that eat my heart
And know no stay and know no hush !
—For my soul is a bird that lurks apart,
A songless thrush
In a myrtle bush,

A sightless hawk in a maple tree,
Hid from my riddled heart and me !
And the music stirs but will not speed.

—Oh for a soul that sings !
—Oh for a soul that preys indeed !
—The cold slow eating things.

The heavens are lifted up, the broad world glows,
And deep is starry night and purple day,
And ah ! I touch thy quivering cords to rouse
The sweet sad things to eat my heart away.

And there is music in the air,
A laughing and a singing and no sighing :
Music that makes all unsad things more fair
And whists the slow things with its joy undying,
Whilst I for joy despair.

Sweet sad things that eat my heart,
And know no times, no seasons mark !
—For my soul is a bird that flies apart,
A songful lark
In the purple dark,
A keen-eyed hawk in the welkin free,
Clear to my riddled heart and me !

And the music lulls, and will not stir.

—Oh, that my soul so sings !

—Oh, that my soul so poises her !

—The sweet sad eating things.

(He lifts his head and sings.)

When I am glad, my harp is sad

And dashes all my song ;

When I am sad, my harp is glad

And adds to the dull wrong.

Or it may be when I am glad,

My harp is merry too ;

Then lack I something sweet and sad,

Or joy is worse than woe.

Or may it be when I am sad,

My harp, too, mournful is ;

Then need I something bright and glad,

Or woe is less than bliss.

For bliss may be the increase of bliss,

And sorrow balm of sorrow ;

But all the world is all amiss

With me. And so, good-morrow !

CONFESSIONAL

(A FRAGMENT FROM "LIFE")

I HAVE brought life in ruin on my head,
—A mighty Samson in my last despair,
—And mangled lie among the mangled dead,
Who better had been first to perish there.
Behold the ruin I have made so surely
Of that proud pleasure-house built so securely,
Which I as easily at last have shed
As Autumn sheds her glories on the air!

—More easily than one who shakes a tree
And brings quick apples all about his head;
—Ah me, that some bright fruitage ripe and free
Had fallen to my shaking now, instead
Of this vast ruin with its heavy glories,
Delicate chambers and voluptuous stories,
And lustrous outward shows of purity,
And all its histories and secrets dread!

FRAGMENT TO BEAUTY

THOU oldest and thou newest thing of all ;
Most durable, most transient ; most dear
To youth and unto age most tragical ;

Beauty, upon the opening of the year
Most meet it is that I to thee should sing
Among the myriad voices of the Spring,
While love is waking that so soon shall cease,
And lovely flowers forget life's niggard lease,
And green leaves dream not of their withering.

The love, the flowers, the leaves shall fade and die,
And thou remain for other Springs to show
That wist not of as lovely Springs gone by,
Nor of as lovely Springs that time shall strow ;
Nor wonder at those withered things that fly
Restless upon the lightest winds, or lie
In mats upon their feet, nor ever guess
That they once filled the air with loveliness,
Or dallied in soft amour with the sky.

Ah, Beauty, how so young and fresh thou art !

I ever trace in that calm look of thine

A gentle sad antiquity of heart

Which makes thee lovelier and more divine,

As thou wert weary grown of being fair,

And death were something which thou canst not
share,

And something life, which no fond hope relieves,

Like all the fallings of the Autumn leaves,

And youth and Spring the new-birth of Despair.

So, mournful Beauty, do I turn from thee,

Embodied in the transiency of Spring,

To thee more spirit-certain if less free

In those eternal songs that poets sing,

—The songs of joy, processional and fleet ;

The songs of passion and of praise ; the meet

Devotion-songs of strength and faith made fast ;

And those the wildest songs of all, at last,

Too far from joy to be aught else but sweet.

TURNED WOMAN

BRIGHT are the woods and the blossomy spaces,
and bright are the brave clouds flying ;
Fresh and clear are the singing birds, and mur-
murous moves the sea.
April hath marked her swelling breast, and her long
dark hair she is plying ;
Chooseth a longer kirtle now to cover her gleaming
knee.

She, young Dian, no more shall harry the deer in the
shady forest,
Chaste and bare as the morning wind, with long hair
flying free.
Now no more shall her cold boy lover—thou man
who more than adorest !
—Brook unawed the covered grace that he once
blushed not to see.

Deep and dark are the fragrant woods, and warm
is the fain air closing ;
Soft are the sweetest singing birds, and the mur-
murous sea replies.
Something nearer than joy can be, as sadness near,
is reposing
Now in the deep soft sweetness dark of passionate
April's eyes.

She at last, so long undesiring, knoweth not what
she desireth,
Feeling her bright heart languish alone, her spirit
searching go ;
Soon at a word she leapeth affrighted, soon at a
touch she fireth
Back from her absent kindling thought to her
present body aglow.

She no longer aloof shall dare with raillery of bright
glances
Challenge his growing fervour and mock his solemn
serious pain.
He no more at her altered mood shall dare his
aweless advances.
Ne'er shall he be the cold boy-lover nor she rash
Dian again.

LOVER'S SONG

(FROM "LIFE")

NO single sorrow shall e'er befall us,
No silver thread be found in thy hair ;
Love shall rock us to sleep and call us,
And keep night quiet and daytime fair ;
And the future shall cover what might appal us,
And the burying past rot all our care.

Be youth and passion with us for ever,
The beauty of lips ne'er fade away ;
What youth has joined let not age dissever,
Nor Time's destroyer know Time's decay.
Let the future cover what shall be never,
And the past ne'er gather what still shall stay.

May life be ever the darling present ;
—What can the past and the future hold ?
The full moon only can wane decrecent,

The full year only scatter her gold.
But this shall never be evanescent
If love be loyal and beauty bold.

And this I said when life was before us :
—We have had sorrows ; your hair is gray ;
Only death could have folded o'er us
All that I grudged him so that day.
Has age than youth less love to empower us ?
Has love not grown with our fading ? Say !

“SUNSET AND EVENING STAR, AND AFTER
THAT THE DARK ”

UPON this mild March evening little birds
Flock to the budded tall tree tops and sing
Soft Jubilate to the sense of Spring ;
—Music too sweet and swift to wait on words,
But strong to move the heart to deep accords
Of silent melody, and sure to wring
Thought from the use of lips by offering
A clearer meaning than all speech affords.

Now dies that gentle evensong again ;
The sun upon the west has tilted up
His golden ducts of light, as if to drain
The daytime back into his sunken cup ;
And from her eastern barbican unshown
Night slowly lets her mighty drawbridge down.

INTERLUDE

NOW night had threshed out all her golden grain,
And wondering at the harvest silent stood ;
There shone her thin bright sickle hung again
Below the webbed eaves, and close were lain
Her windy flails. Along the darkling wood
In downy flight a white owl fluttered plain
And ghostly ; and I too went in solemn mood
—A thing of spirit more than flesh and blood.

I seemed not walking on the ground at all,
Night seemed a more material thing than I,
The owl a being gross substantial,
And such an earthly thing it seemed to fly,
And such imprisonment to live withal,
And such a thing impossible to die.

MIRIAM

WHEN as I look upon your beauty fair,
So young and fresh a thing, so surely new,
So sweet a novelty of youth, and you
So separate from all charms that ever were
Before, or shall be evermore, I seem
To look on something very sweet and old,
And known before the last Creation rolled
Into Reality—which is God's dream.

For beauty is the oldest thing of all.
—And yet her closest bosom-friend is Youth;
And is of all things most ephemeral;
—And yet her consort is eternal truth.
Wherefore my eyes upon your beauty gaze
With a strange mingled sense of awe and ruth.

THE THUMPING

I HEARD a rabbit thumping under ground,
To warn his furry folk that I was near.
And first I laughed to hear the warning sound
Far-carrying, I suppose, but hardly clear.
Then was I seized with a more dreadful fear
Than held the cowering rabbits all around,
To think that at my coming should appear
Distrust so usual and fear so profound :
—To think their fear so necessary is
And they so blameless, and to think that I,
Who blameful listened to the shaken sod,
Shall, by my own clear faults condemned, I wis,
Upon that day when Judgment fills the sky,
So thump and cower from the fear of God.

DOGGED

(HEREDITY'S SONG FROM "LIFE")

DRIPPING, dripping, and dripping,
As fell as the silence of dearth,
Was ever a sound so single,
Ever so lone a sound,
So full of the rot of the heavens,
So full of the rotting earth,
So pitiless and so steady,
So wicked and so profound?

I went up the dripping forest,
And turned again and again;
For ever I heard, as I journeyed,
A breathing terrible thing
Come in the wake of my walking,
Dogging the fear in my brain,
So steadily, steadily creeping,
And stealthily following.

—Stepping between my footsteps,
Breathing between my breath,
Beating between my heart-beats,
Thinking between my thoughts,
—Oh, deadly beyond all deadness,
A damning triumph of death,
A being sicker and surer
For seeming a thing of nought.

I felt it closer and threat'ning
If joy arose in my heart,
And I felt it close and forbidding
If I opened my lips to sing ;
But and if I loved for a moment
It withered my soul apart
With a sense of terrible pleasure,
Like a wicked beautiful thing.

And it would not let me forget it,
And it never would let me see,
Though I turned again in my travel,
Oft again and around
In a dread and little desiring
To see what a thing would be
So pitiless and so steady,
So wicked and so profound.

Dripping, dripping, and dripping
Down from the drenchy trees,
Was ever a sound so deadly,
Ever a sound so fell?
Would life had a little respite,
And love had a moment's ease,
Or death were a thing less dreadful
With the Worm and Fire of Hell.

HEREDITY

(FROM "LIFE")

ALAS! What leaguer of the Past is this
That hems my soul in, such a force of days
In companies of months, such deep arrays
Of year-battalions, such brigades I wis
Of centuries amiss,
And æons in such divisions dark always
—The full embattled Past! And swelling his
Resistless forces yet in strong relays
And column of long route fresh days come on,
Falling behind his banners, armed and bent
By my rebellious passions all anon
To keep my soul from his enfranchisement.

What battle should a single soul contain
Against such everlasting odds as these?
—How dare to take a fitful moment's ease,
Lest his past watches all be rendered vain

And the foe pierce again
His oft-repaired defence?—How hope to seize
Victory from such gathered powers amain?
Yet hath the leaguer still some stress to please,
Much pride my soul in being worthy held
Of such a numerous and shrew attack
—Such strength in pride that far from being quelled
He sallies forth and wrests the leaguer back!

And if despair, that treachery within,
Or sooth Temptation treacherous without
—That smooth ambassador of terms—lure doubt
To yield up more than arms could ever win,
And his tired troops begin
To talk surrender and lay their arms about,
Forgetting all the perfidy of sin,
—Then stirs my soul from his lulled sense of rout
And weariness and promise fickle-sweet,
Remembering past surrenders foul-betrayed,
And victory scarce saved from false defeat,
When he had been disarmed and disarrayed.

O Liberty! As glorious 'tis to die,
As sweet to live, for thee, as dire to live
And lose the while we still have lives to give
And thou canst yet be saved. Strong captaincy

My soul resumes thereby :

—Bids back the false ambassador, alive

If he would still to his false masters fly ;

Takes all his battle, and alone will strive

Against the angry onset of his foes ;

Till his tired troops, for very pride and shame,

Follow, as he from strength to conquest goes

And all the æons to himself makes tame.

TIME-SERVERS

THE studded night now stood ajar
And pale the morning showed between ;
Sweet sang the silver horns afar,
Sweet sank their sounds serene.

Awake ! between the night and day
Time passes with his bright array
And banners, with tall gonfalons
His mighty warriors shelled in mail,
And in apparel gay their sons,
—Wearily and with faces pale
—And maidens very fair to see
But very sad to look upon,
And aged dames—how sour they be !
And gracious dames so sweet and wan.

Swing to the studded door again
And let them pass before I see !
Sad sang the silver trumpets plain,
Sad sank the melody.

Who shall swing to the studded night
On the dark hinges grinding slow?
—Or stay the silver trumpet's might?
—Or bind your eyes enow?

Then fling the studded door, fling wide!
Let in the healthy day before
Love has one recreant more to chide,
Time's train one follower more!

Who shall swing wide the studded door?
—Or haste the hinges grinding gray?
Sweet sang the silver horns once more,
Sad sank the sounds away!

ADIEU TO THE MUSE

YESTERDAY

KIND Goddess, from whose worshipping I come
With all the sweet delight which love should
claim,

Though from thy marble lips no murmur came
Because perhaps I was too venturesome,
Forgetting awe too much, too little love !
O thou to whom I knelt, whose heart I prove,
At whose thick teeming altar I have led
So many hopes, so many tears have shed,
And prayers so many, heedless thou above !

If once so joyfully I knelt and rose,
Regarding not thy silence most austere,
Without the usual tribute of a tear,
Or sad abasement of imploring brows,
Forgive my latest and my lonely wrong !

For I in fear who worshipped thee so long
Came suddenly with joy ; since ere I prayed
My prayer was answered. Still I worship made
Before I sang thy overmastering song.

TO-DAY

But now I come in bitter tears again,
With no reproaches and no sacrifice,
Save what upon my broken spirit lies
Like tender victim pitifully slain
Upon the broken faggots ere the blue
Oil-fostered fragrant flame has fluttered through
—Nay weighs upon the altar, kills the fire !
—Even my love, my unconsumed desire,
My pleasure sweet ! I come to bid adieu.

Sad victim ! whom I often slew before
And left upon my soul, life's altar, dead,
But, ere the fire was fully kindled, fled,
And saw him come so bloodily once more,
Fawning anon, despite the wild blind blow
That I had dealt for death before and now,
With wonder and such unreprouchful trust
In his mild eyes, with such a tender thrust
Of his cold muzzle in my hand. O thou !

Ah me ! Ah me ! but I have struck him down,
And there he lies in such a woeful heap !
I watched the happy flames about him creep,
Then die, so little seemed they to condone !
O kindly Goddess, I bessech thee yet,
Although the dismal sacrifice was set
Against thy worship, from thine altar lend
Strong unconsuming fire to make an end,
That he may be destroyed and I forget !

Thou wilt not ? Ah ! must he for ever lie
Upon my heavy spirit, cold and dead ?
Is this life's dire acceptance sole instead
Of withering fire ? Is this thy penalty ?
Must I, sad priest, for ever stand at gaze
Upon the costly victim all my days,
And feel thy angry undiverted eyes
Smile coldly on the futile sacrifice,
Till its hard glory gathers like disgrace ?

Nay, life has little watching to be done,
And breathless ardours will bring sweeter ease
Than piping shepherds find below the trees,
When like a Cyclops noon is with the sun

In his broad forehead. Pain's unselfish scars
Shall shine through Pity's gloom, bright avatars,
More softly than when gentle zephyrs sleep,
And fragrant night is warm and dark and deep,
And all the level seas are filled with stars.


I was not one of thy great worshippers
Whose mighty music also was divine :
My pleasures and sweet pains were only mine ;
My song had not the sacred touch that stirs
Woe to the depth of her dark heart with bliss,
And joy from his bright shallows to the abyss,
And crushed despair again to gladder strife
Even to the failure-built success of life,
And unto something nobler proud success.


Therefore, adieu, kind Goddess ! I would shake
Thy lovely languors from me like a slough,
And leave thy flowerful meadows for the rough,
Bleak, roaring, barren mountain-paths, and take
For music the strong sounds that life can send
Melodious through love's instruments, and bend
My heart to breaking like Ulysses' bow
That none but my own soul can handle so,
And like his arrow my strong purpose send.

So let the slaughtered victim lie unknown,
Unvalued, unconsumèd, unbewailed,
Forgotten, a proud sacrifice that failed
Like Cain's—since life, offended, would not own
The selfish offering—for time to strew.
Love looks not in as Pride was wont to do,
And minds not whether he be there or gone.
Wherefore, my worship is to Love alone,
And unto thee, kind Goddess, my adieu.

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